

APRIL 2006

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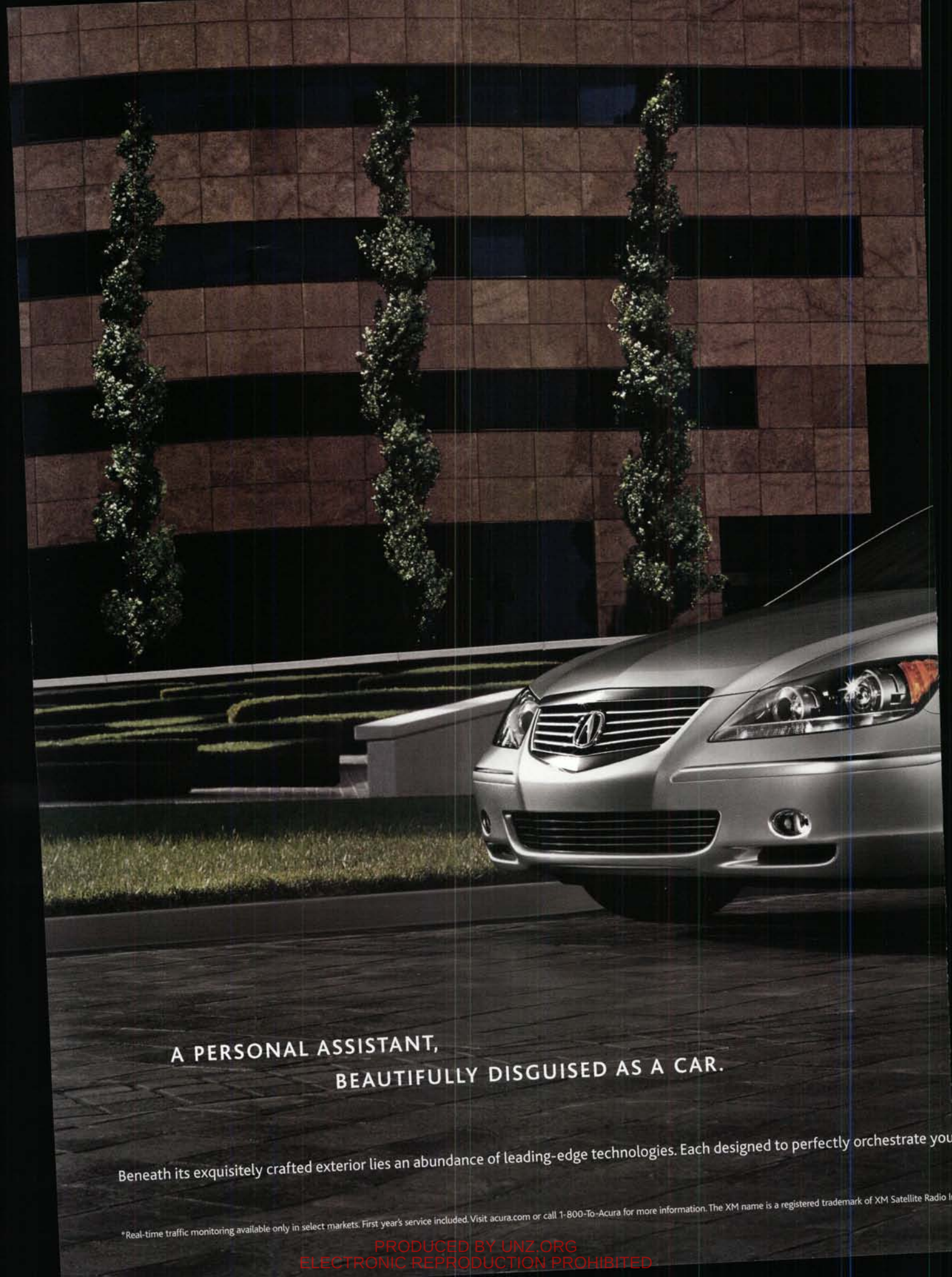
BY MATTHEW TEAGUE



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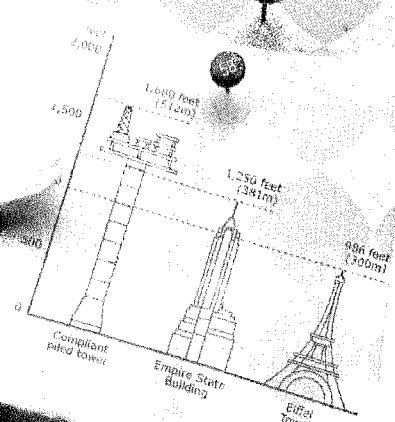
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**The world consumes two barrels
of oil for every barrel discovered.**

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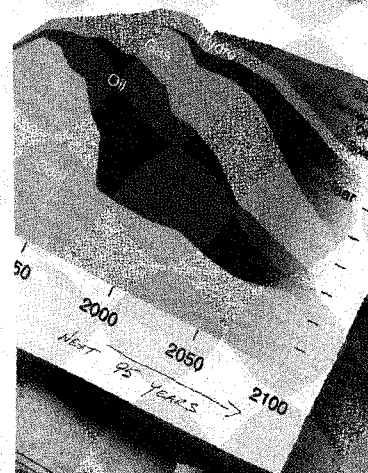


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World Energy Demand



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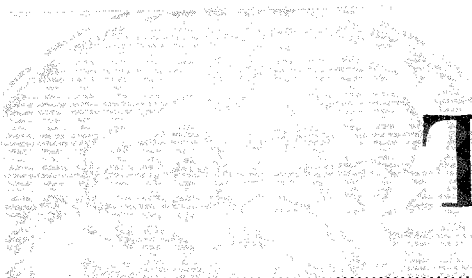
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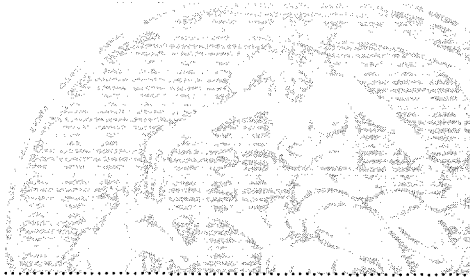
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FROM BELFAST WITH LOVE

Matthew Teague talks about “Double Blind,” his extraordinary profile of a double agent who helped undermine the IRA

INTROVERTS OF THE WORLD, UNITE!

A conversation with Jonathan Rauch, whose essay in the March 2003 Atlantic may have unwittingly touched off an Introverts' Rights revolution

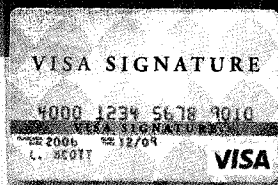
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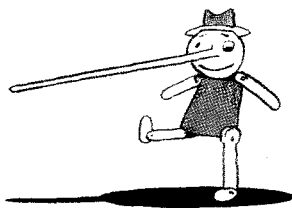
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APRIL 9

Ciao, Silvio?

Silvio Berlusconi, the slick-haired Italian prime minister and George W. Bush ally in the Iraq war, faces a challenge from the center-left in Italy's general election today. Scandal has mired the tenure of the richest man in Italy (Berlusconi owns much of the Italian media) and hampered his center-right party, Forza Italia, which has rewritten a significant portion of the country's white-collar fraud laws to stop legal proceedings against the prime minister and his associates. Forza also passed a new electoral law that will soften the blow if the party is voted out. In an effort to convince voters that he is serious about traditional family values, Berlusconi, a former cruise-ship director, has sworn off sex until the election.

APRIL 21

The Queen Turns Eighty

As she celebrates her eightieth birthday today, Queen Elizabeth II, England's head of state since 1952, will transfer some of her duties to

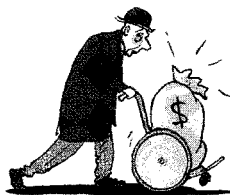
the presumptive future king, Prince Charles. Having weathered more than a decade of scandal, Charles will begin greeting foreign dignitaries, overseeing investitures, and spending more time with Prime Minister Tony Blair. The occasion of the queen's birthday also heralds the bestowal of a new royal portrait, an "impressionistic" piece painted by Australian singer and television personality Rolf Harris (famous for his song "Tie Me Kangaroo Down, Sport") that some critics say depicts the queen as blurry and heavy-featured. Still, it's considered an improvement on Harris's first attempts, in which the queen was said to resemble "a pork butcher from Norwich."



APRIL 24

Phil Spector Murder Trial

Phil Spector, the legendary producer of such hits as "Da Doo Ron Ron" and "Walkin' in the Rain," as well as the Beatles' *Let It Be* and John Lennon's *Imagine*, stands trial today for the February 2003



APRIL 15

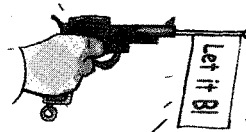
Pension Overhaul Deadline

Today is the unofficial deadline to shore up the shaky private pension system. The federal agency that insures private pensions ran a \$22.8 billion deficit last year, and recent bankruptcies in the airline industry have raised concerns that taxpayers will be left to fund an S&L-style bailout if the government has to pick up more private pensions (already underfunded by \$450 billion). The House and Senate have both proposed higher premiums, tougher rules for companies underfunding their pensions, and measures to encourage greater retirement investing by employees, including a provision to automatically enroll workers in 401(k) plans. Congress is expected to act by today, the year's first deadline for companies to make pension contributions.

CALENDAR

WHAT TO WATCH FOR IN THE WEEKS AHEAD

shooting death of actress Lana Clarkson, his sometime consort whose movie credits include *Barbarian Queen* and *Amazon Women on the Moon*. Spector initially said that he shot her by accident, before saying that her death was a suicide. The eccentric sixty-five-year-old, who has allegedly brandished firearms at women—and is rumored to have pulled guns on clients including Lennon, the Ramones, and Stevie Wonder—could spend life in prison.



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Spy vs. Spy

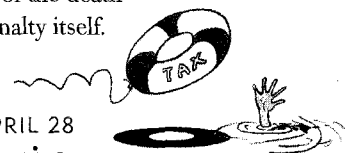
In another spies-and-leaks story that has captivated Washington, two former employees of the influential Israeli lobby the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) go on trial today, accused of giving the press Pentagon secrets that detailed an alleged Iranian plot to kill Americans and Israelis in Iraq. The AIPAC staffers' source for the information, former Pentagon analyst Larry Franklin, pleaded guilty and was sentenced on January 20 to twelve and a half years in prison. He is cooperating in the government's case against the lobbyists.

APRIL 26

Supreme Court Revisits the Death Penalty

In a surprise decision in January, the Supreme Court halted the execution of a

Florida inmate, Clarence Hill, moments before he would have died by lethal injection (he had already been strapped to the gurney and had an IV needle in his arm). A lower appellate court had rejected Hill's last-minute challenge that lethal injection was "cruel and unusual" (recent studies have suggested that the drug cocktail leaves the condemned conscious and in pain during the execution) before the Supreme Court agreed to hear the case. A decision, expected by July, will address only the procedural question of how last-minute death-penalty challenges may be brought—not the constitutionality of lethal injection or of the death penalty itself.

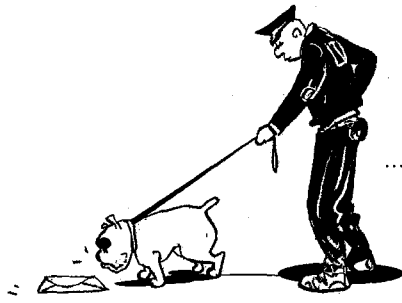


APRIL 28

Survivor: Federal Penitentiary

Richard Hatch, the mud-splattered Machiavellian nudist whose scheming in Borneo won him the million-dollar prize on *Survivor*, didn't fare so well before a more conventional jury. On January 25, he was found guilty of failing to pay taxes on his winnings and related earnings. Sentencing is today. The Rhode Island corporate trainer claims the show's producers had agreed to pay the taxes (his lawyers said he had arranged the deal in exchange for information about cheating on the island). Hatch faces up to thirteen years in prison.

—MATTHEW QUIRK



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Year of Two Popes

Paul Elie's "Year of Two Popes" (January/February *Atlantic*) was an interesting tour of the rarefied atmosphere of the inner workings of the Holy See, but it scarcely touched on the real situation of the Catholic Church here on Planet Earth.

The Church in Ireland is in free fall in the wake of the Ferns Report on clergy sexual abuse. In Spain, psychologist Pepe Rodriguez has published two major studies on the same problem. In the United States, the clergy abuse scandals have not abated and could end up costing the Church billions, while donations, church attendance, and parochial-school enrollments have plummeted over the past third of a century.

If the Holy See could come down to earth, get over its obsessions with contraception, abortion rights, in vitro fertilization, divorce, homosexuality, and male dominance—obsessions that most First World Catholics do not share—and concentrate on the social-justice and ethical teachings of the Nazarene carpenter, it could make enormous contributions toward helping to solve the myriad real problems facing humankind today.

Edd Doerr
Silver Spring, Md.

Having lived at the Vatican for four years while doing graduate studies and having talked with Vatican "insiders" during recent visits to Rome, I read Paul Elie's "Year of Two Popes" with interest. While not speculating on Elie's sources, I am relatively sure that they are not mine.

One particular "conflict moment" seems overblown. If the image of George Carey in an episcopal role at the opening of the Holy Doors at St. Paul's Outside the Walls was such anathema to Cardinal Ratzinger, why did Benedict

XVI appoint Archbishop William Levada to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, when said prelate has publicly advocated a review of the question of the validity of Anglican orders? No one who knows Archbishop Levada believes that he would ever do or say anything that would fail to pass CDF muster—that is, Ratzinger's analysis.

Could it be that Elie and his sources do not really know Benedict's mind on this matter? Elie's article is well written, but it also reminds some of us that there are many types of Vatican "insiders."

Paul E. Cote
Portland, Maine

Paul Elie has hit a home run with his riveting and brilliantly written article. Only toward the end of his piece does he go seriously astray. His claim that Pope Benedict is "unschooled in the American experience," and at age seventy-nine is too old to catch up, overlooks several trips Ratzinger has made to the United States, uninsulated by the pomp and ceremony of papal visits. What is true is that American pragmatism is alien to Benedict—as it was to his predecessor. A man of ideas, Benedict is a Platonist in philosophy (rather than an Aristotelian). His theological lodestar is Augustine, not Thomas Aquinas. A European theologian who worked closely with Ratzinger for many years reports that although the pope speaks elegant French and Italian, he is uncomfortable in English, and goes so far as to say on occasion that it is impossible to express ideas in our language.

In his frequent meetings with American churchmen over the years, however, Ratzinger has been warm, open, and curious about our problems. Elie cites testimony to this effect by Archbishop Harry J. Flynn of Minneapolis-St. Paul, and Archbishop Wilton Gregory of Atlanta confirms it. Gregory has stated publicly

that in his twice-yearly visits to Rome as president of the Bishops' Conference, the meetings with Ratzinger were the easiest and most productive he experienced.

Reverend John Jay Hughes
St. Louis, Mo.

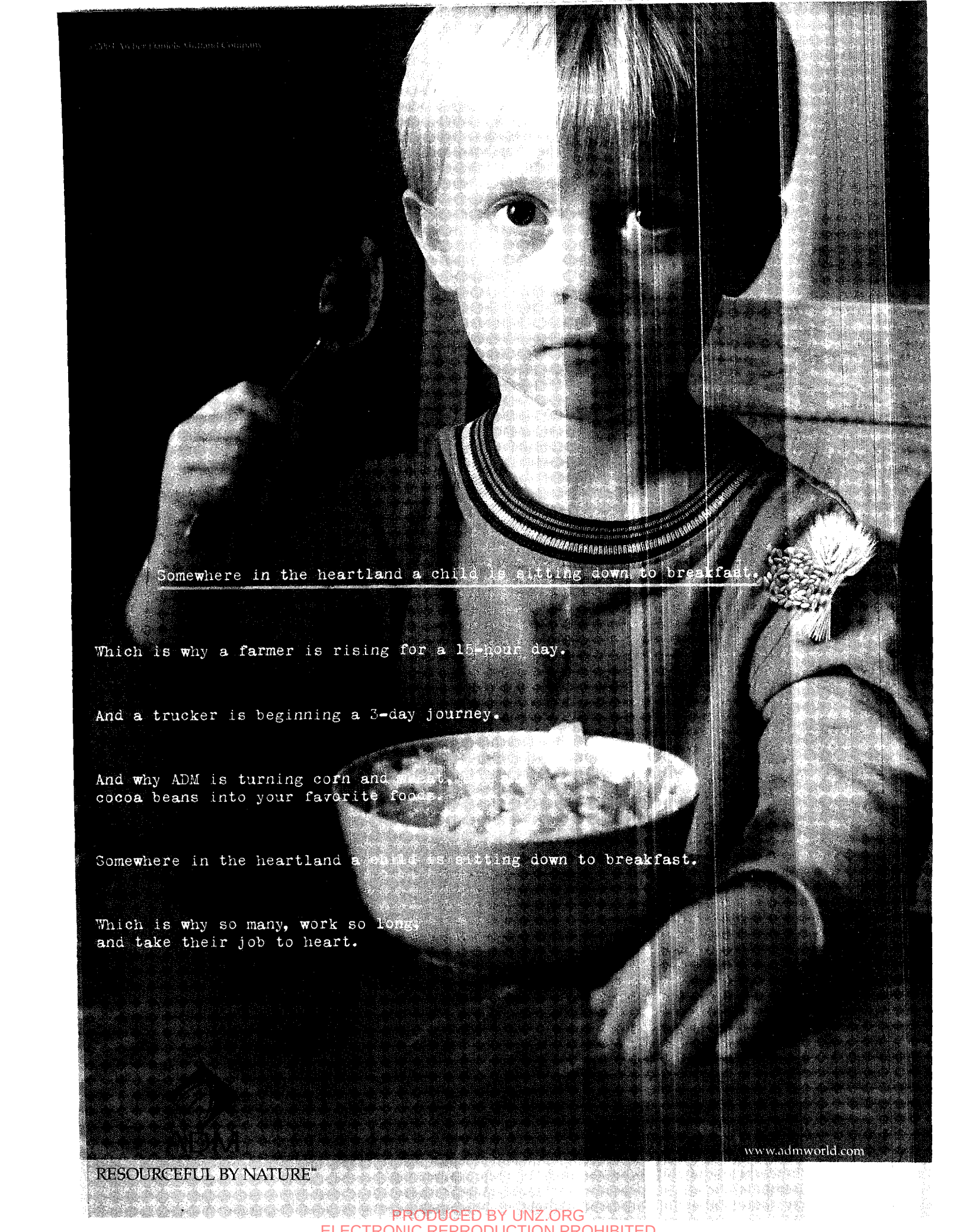
Paul Elie criticizes the pontificate of Pope Pius XII, an era when Catholicism flourished, asserting that the leadership of Pius XII was not a factor in the prosperity of the Catholic Church during that time. Writing that "much of what is best in Catholic tradition has arisen in the shadow of an essentially negative papacy," he draws a parallel to Benedict's papacy and his hope for positive outcomes. As someone who grew up in the 1950s, during the pontificate of Pius XII, I had firsthand knowledge of the faith and generosity of that era's Catholics, whose strong identity was rooted in the papacy and the belief that the pope was the successor to Saint Peter and the vicar of Christ to whom was pledged respect, reverence, and obedience.

Elie fears that "the clarity of [Benedict's] world view will turn some Catholics away." In today's culture, those Catholics who reject cafeteria Catholicism, moral relativism, and secularism, and who are faithful to Church teaching, will carry on the tradition of the 1950s Catholics who accomplished so much for the Church. They will not turn away, but uphold the clarity of Benedict's world view.

Mary Butler
Quincy, Mass.

Paul Elie replies:

My article was grounded in the testimony of my sources, even when they weren't quoted directly, and I'll base my reply here on what I was told in Rome. Was Ratzinger troubled by John Paul's seeming endorsement of Anglican orders during the Jubilee year? As I made clear in the article,



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Cardinal Avery Dulles told me he thought so, and others did so, too; Archbishop Levada, in conversation in Rome, spoke of Anglican orders—namely the ordination of openly homosexual men as the dividing issue in Anglican-Catholic dialogue. Is the new pope unschooled in the American experience? This insight was volunteered by a crucial source—one personally acquainted with both the new pope and the Catholic Church in North America—speaking after the conclave. Will American Catholics turn away from Benedict's clarity? Many probably will, in part because his clarity (as Mr. Doerr suggests) often seems like an indifference to the struggles of ordinary Catholics on the ground. Even so, it is likely that both those who leave and those who stay (as Ms. Butler suggests) will have had their own beliefs clarified through their consideration of Benedict's. I made this point in the conclusion of the article.

Teen Sexuality

In the middle of Caitlin Flanagan's lengthy article ("Are You There God? It's Me, Monica," January/February *Atlantic*), she takes a swipe at *Frontline*'s 1999 documentary "The Lost Children of Rockdale County," accusing it of birthing the "oral-sex hysteria" in the media and criticizing it for depicting "isolated teen depravity." She is wrong.

In reviewing the program, Dr. Richard Blum, professor and director of the Division of General Pediatrics and Adolescent Health at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, noted, "What is so disturbing about the program is not that we are witnessing a rare event in the United States, but rather an event that is quite common." Indeed, our producers, who interviewed more than 100 middle- and upper-middle-class kids, found that these experiences were not those of an isolated cadre of "bad kids"; minimizing the experiences of these kids by calling them "hysterical" is exactly the kind of abdication of adult responsibility that led to these behaviors in the first place. It's a shame that Flanagan never spoke with *Frontline*. Had she done so, she would have learned that we have received dozens of letters from teachers and mental-health professionals who found a resonance in this story with

their own experiences with teens, and have used the program in their work to address issues of teen sexuality.

Louis Wiley
Executive Editor
Frontline
Boston, Mass.

I found Caitlin Flanagan's criticism of Planned Parenthood disturbing and grossly negligent. After reading her article, I visited Planned Parenthood's Web site and found the advice given there frank and extraordinarily beneficial. The "teenwire.com" page to which Flanagan refers also provides specific, optimistic, and constructive information, answering questions that teens have about sex, and have had for generations, whether we want them to or not. Flanagan conveniently and deceitfully omits teenwire.com's sound advice contained in the same answer that she quotes, which continues, "No one should ever do something sexually that they are not comfortable doing, and no one should ever feel pressured into engaging in any kind of sex act." She also ignores responses like, "No one should feel pressured into or have to do something sexually that they don't like doing—or doing something that is not reciprocated," for instance, and others that recommend using a condom during oral sex.

If I thought parents, schools, and religious organizations were providing information as beneficial, expansive, and necessary as Planned Parenthood, perhaps I would agree with Flanagan's rather sophomoric conclusion. However, it is only through straightforward education, self-awareness, and a balance of power between the sexes that humanity can move past the primitive, adolescent stage of sexuality to a mature stage that views this glorious aspect of human nature as a gift rather than a curse.

Debra Di Blasi
Kansas City, Mo.

Caitlin Flanagan's probing review of the culture of girls and oral sex was marred by her telling and gratuitous insult of Laura Bush. It is precisely because role models like Ms. Flanagan denigrate women known to be monogamous, committed, and polite

that young girls feel they must service every boy who comes along. Ms. Flanagan's assumption that a good woman like Laura Bush neither enjoys nor gets good sex (and that everyone agrees on this) really says it all.

Joseph R. Egan
McLean, Va.

A seeming critique of alarmism, Caitlin Flanagan's "Are You There God? It's Me, Monica" is itself a hysterical response to a hysterical "epidemic," and hysterical is something nice girls become when they're bored. It was true in 1900 and 1950, and it's still true now. Eager to place the blame on external sources—pornographers, rappers, horn-dog adolescent boys—Flanagan casually neglects to mention that nice girls have, in a way, been forced to their knees by their own parents—the same parents whom Flanagan cites as the last bastion against obscenity.

Flanagan claims that American culture has become increasingly brazen. It has. But this upsurge in immodesty applies to child rearing as well. Child-centered discipline has somehow become a feasible method of raising kids. Potty training is postponed until age five. Children are regularly praised to the heavens for picking up their dirty laundry or for coming in eleventh place in a spelling bee. Backchat is exalted as self-expression. Even the requisite stint in rehab is considered a chance to regroup as a family. The bar for what counts as achievement has never before been set so low, which means that in the era of the overappreciated child, scandalizing one's parents has become notoriously difficult. Is it therefore any surprise that nice girls have had to resort to train parties in order to rebel against their folks?

By cushioning their children's precious self-esteem at every turn, parents have forced their daughters to lash back with the most "adult" means at the girls' disposal. Sick to death of the empty praise that they rightly recognize as vapid, they're turning to irresponsible oral sex in order to infuriate their parents, in order to be made responsible for something—anything. Scandal offers nice girls the promise of having



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to explain themselves, something they are very seldom asked or expected to do, especially by those who love them best.

There isn't anything shocking about blasé blowjobs performed by tweeners in a land where too much of everything is too cheaply and too easily had. It is shocking that in a nation rife with amateur shrinks who presumably understand the through-the-looking-glass mechanics of the subconscious, the nice girls' bad behavior is being read straight. If a cough is never just a cough, why is a blowjob just a blowjob?

Daria Jaremkó
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Caitlin Flanagan wonders why we are so quick to accept uncritically the fellatio epidemic among young teens. The fact is, the girls of the particular social class about whom she eloquently writes have been programmed to be pleasers from the day they were required to interview for a coveted spot in the right kindergarten. Eight years later, they begin the grueling college-application process, wherein they are told that, even though they are still in middle school, they need to start thinking about being passionate about something—actually, several things: a couple of sports, a musical instrument, and the plight of the hungry make up a good short list. Who the hell has time for a sexual awakening—or anything else, for that matter? If it can't be scheduled in a forty-five-minute block on a BlackBerry, it won't happen. Flanagan worries that “girls are vulnerable to great damage through the kind of sex in which they are, as individuals, as valueless and unrecognizable as chattel.” As disturbing as Flanagan may find this behavior, it's only a grimly logical extension of these girls' nonsexual lives: they simply have never made a substantive decision about what pleases them, because the opportunity to do so has never arisen. Why should they approach sex any differently? Flanagan laments that our girls are on their knees. I suppose we ought to be glad they're not completely down for the count.

David Lasson
Santa Monica, Calif.

As an eighteen-year-old male with a younger sister, I felt that Caitlin Flanagan's review was misguided and out of touch. Substitute “oral sex” for “free love” and “rap music” for “Johnny Cash's lyrics,” and you have what Baby Boomers must have heard from their parents. Ms. Flanagan's fear is no different from what parents might have felt in the 1960s, as sexual conventions loosened and children listened to Mr. Cash sing about snorting cocaine and shooting his woman down.

If casual oral sex or misogynistic song lyrics really are as bad as Ms. Flanagan fears, my generation is headed for deep psychological trauma and abusive marriages. Somehow, though, I wouldn't be surprised if we turn out all right. You don't have to worry about me or my sister, Ms. Flanagan. We'll grow up to be normal, well-adjusted parents who disapprove of our children's music and sexual mores.

Daniel Scivsky
Cambridge, Mass.

When Caitlin Flanagan writes that she is “old-fashioned enough to believe that men and boys are not as likely to be wounded, emotionally and spiritually, by early sexual experience entered into without romantic commitment, as are women and girls,” I wonder if she isn't missing the whole point.

Perhaps these young girls who offer themselves so nonchalantly are actually demonstrating that feminism has reached that long-sought point where girls have become equal to boys and really aren't wounded by early sexual experience. Perhaps that isn't really what feminism was aiming for, but those lurking unintended consequences will get you every time.

Richard S. Blake
East Falmouth, Mass.

Caitlin Flanagan replies:

The notorious Frontline documentary depicted two phenomena: an isolated outbreak of teen depravity and a less alarming but far more widespread change in the sexual habits of suburban teenagers. Louis Wiley's inability to distinguish between these two phenomena—even in the space of a short letter—reveals the fuzzy thinking I discussed in my essay.

I hope that readers will take a few minutes to log on to Planned Parenthood's Web site to learn more about the information the organization makes available to teenagers. Perhaps they will decide that the organization is restoring "a balance of power between the sexes," as Debra Di Blasi believes. Or perhaps they will wonder, as I did, whether they want federal dollars being spent to instruct minors on the function of dildos, on how to engage in "cyber sex," and on answering such questions as, "What happens to semen when it is ejaculated into the anus/rectum?" (Answer: "Most of it will spill out the anus ... Hope this information helps! Take care, teenwire.com.")

Joseph Egan is concerned that my comment about Laura Bush constituted an attack on her instead of a bit of fun had at Planned Parenthood's expense. As it happens, I am an admirer of Laura Bush. She has shown grace and forbearance in a tough job, she reads good books, she has occasioned zero scandals during her time in the White House, and she seems courageous. Our politics are different, but I am proud to have her as the first lady.

The letters of Daria Jaremko and David Lasson provide a study in contrasts: one believes that our nation's girls are mollycoddled underachievers, the other that they are a master race in the making, dashing from sports practice to music lessons to community-service activities. What both might agree upon is that our nation's girls are stepping into new and untested roles. The most interesting responses to my essay have come from very young women. They have approached it not as a critique of feminism or as a volley in the culture wars but as a piece of writing that comments on the way they live now. "I've been pretty cavalier about my sexual life," one of them wrote me, "because I thought I was being this independent, strong woman who went after what she wanted when she wanted it. But then I realized that it was great for the short term, but left me with total dissatisfaction in the long run."

What girls are discovering, to their infinite heartbreak, is that boys will happily agree to any form of sexual experimentation a girl cares to offer, but will reserve certain honors for the girls who build power in the ancient ways. If you want a boy to invite you to the prom, or to treat you well, or to speak highly of you to his friends, or to spend long hours thinking about how he

can work his way into your heart—if what you want from him is courtship, romance, and respect—the very last thing you should do is ambush him with a sexual favor. That girls no longer know this to the marrow of their bones—that this knowledge comes to them in a slow awakening of misery and shame—is testament to how badly our culture has failed them.

Veterans in Politics

Joshua Green ("Company, Left," January/February *Atlantic*) writes that "World War II yielded a bountiful crop of politicians," including future President Lyndon B. Johnson. However, Johnson was already a politician before the war, having been elected to Congress in 1936 (more than five years before the bombing of Pearl Harbor). Furthermore, as Robert Caro demonstrates in his multi-volume Johnson biography, Johnson's combat service—which consisted of "observing" a single bombing mission—was little more than a publicity stunt.

Dan Marcus
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Joshua Green wouldn't be so surprised by the political participation of Vietnam veterans relative to today's returning Iraq vets and those from World War II if he considered some basic facts. The average age of a combat soldier in the Vietnam War was nineteen. The average age of a combat soldier in World War II was twenty-six. The average age of today's active-duty soldier is twenty-eight, and the average age of today's reservist is thirty-eight.

Returning to civilian life, the youthful Vietnam veteran still had years of work ahead of him to gain or complete an education and establish a career before he could seriously consider running for office. Plus, he had to do so in competition with a great many service-avoiding contemporaries who were already steps ahead of him (and who dominate our politics today).

Beyond that, Green's assertion that the Vietnam-era Democratic Party was "anti-soldier" is totally unsupported. The party's most outspoken liberal critics of that war were veterans, and those vets who did eventually enter politics

were as likely, if not more likely, to do so as Democrats.

Was there anti-soldier feeling among some small number of the most extreme youthful anti-war contemporaries of that war's veterans? Sure. But those movement extremists weren't fans of the Democratic Party, either. More significant but mostly overlooked by all but the veterans who experienced it themselves, anti-soldier feeling wasn't limited to opponents of that war.

Many war supporters disdained the young men who fought in Vietnam and blamed them personally for America's humiliating loss. The "we won *our* war" sneers of older vets that greeted returning vets like my brother were much more deeply wounding than any criticisms from the political fringe.

That lack of respect for the soldiers of Vietnam sadly still persists—and is not limited or defined by political ideology. In fact, one of the most common arguments that conservatives make today against the reinstatement of the draft is the—in their estimation—"poor quality" of the soldiers who fought in Vietnam. And, as recent political campaigns demonstrate, it is the Republican Party that has perfected and found great advantage in exploiting lingering disappointment and doubts about the character and ability of that war's soldiers.

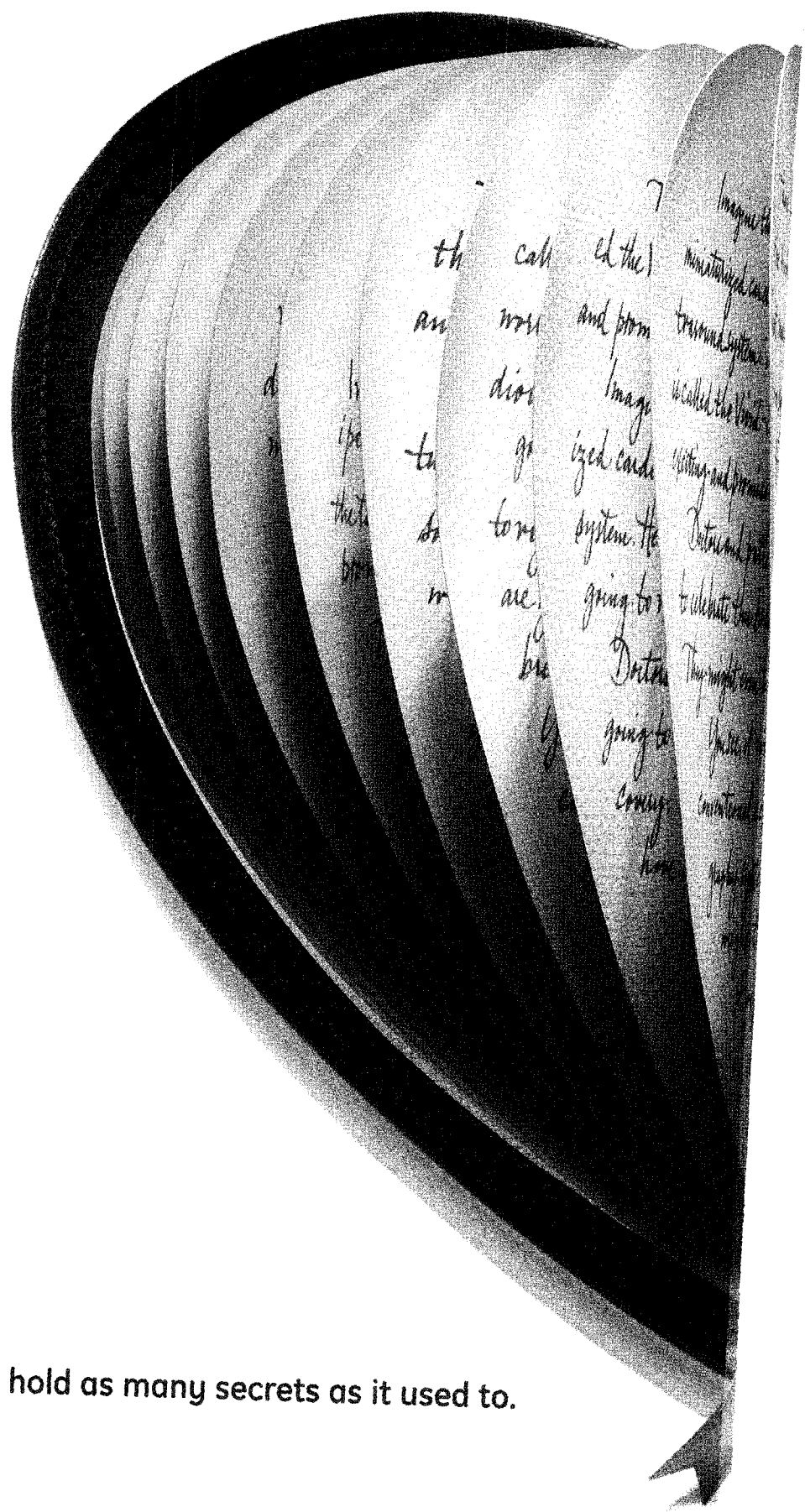
Mary Schumacher
Seattle, Wash.

Joshua Green replies:

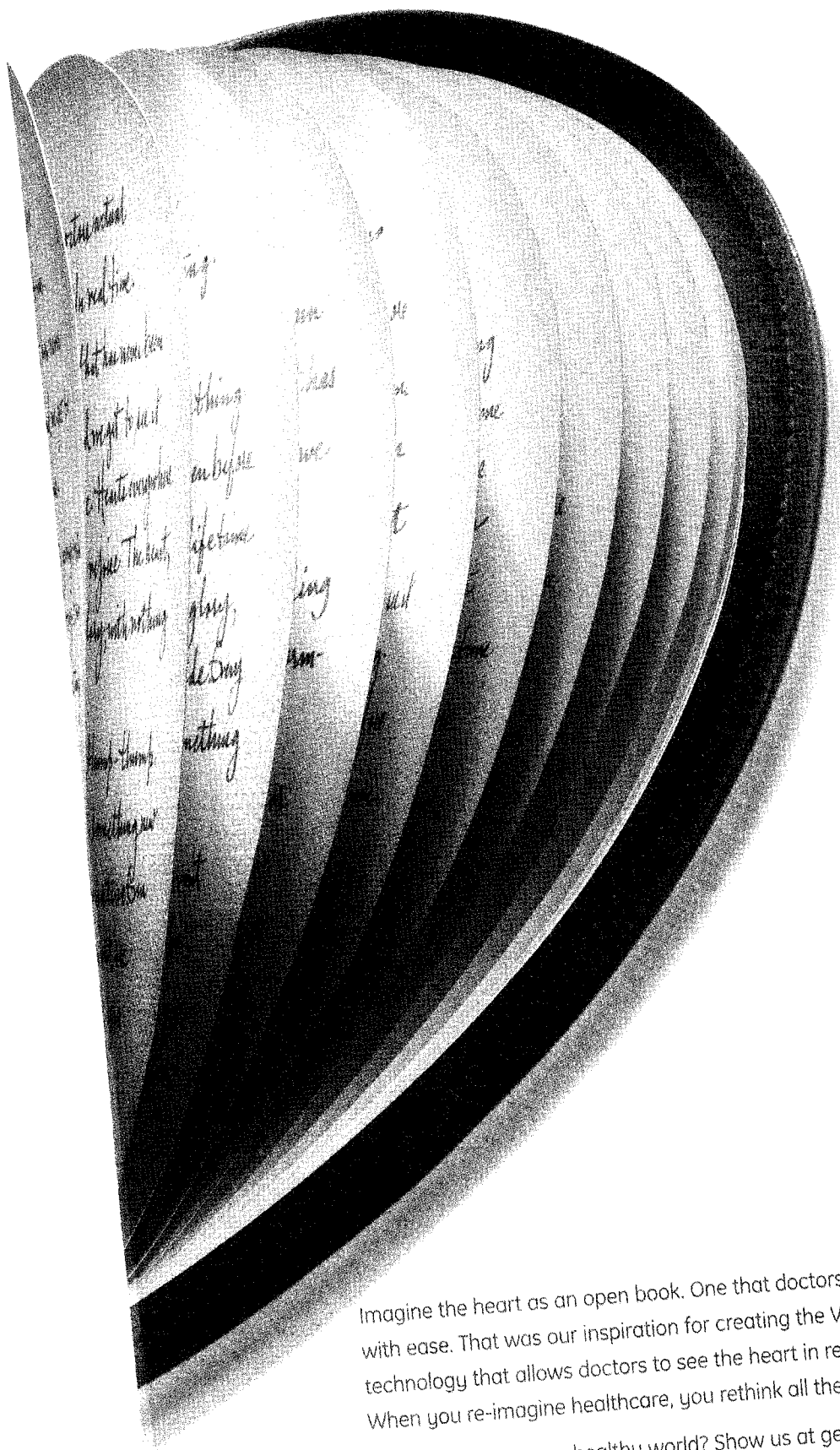
Ms. Schumacher raises the interesting point that Vietnam veterans were, on average, younger than today's veterans, which she suggests explains their weak showing in Congress. Early on, it might have. Yet as my article stated, even seven years after the war's end, when those veterans were older, only four had been elected to Congress. As for her claim that the Democratic Party of that era was supportive of veterans, I did not find anyone—Democrat or Republican, veteran or nonveteran—who did not feel that today's party is more veteran-friendly.

The Border

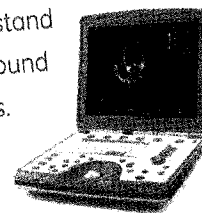
Ross Douthart and Jenny Woodson's article "The Border" (January/February *Atlantic*) mischaracterizes the Min-



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utemen as “a group of civilian vigilantes.” The term “vigilante” connotes someone prepared to violate the law. I am a Minuteman, and in the course of three periods of service (one on the Arizona border, two on the California border), and several others at local protest demonstrations, I never encountered a single Minuteman volunteer who remotely resembled a “vigilante.” Most of them were middle-aged or older, and all of them were decent, ordinary Americans who respect our laws and who are deeply concerned about the loss of our sovereignty and the destruction of our middle class. In my opinion, you owe us and your readers an apology.

True Seaborn

Los Alamitos, Calif.

Please remind me not to take driving directions from your graphic artist. The map of the southwestern United States on page 55 of your January/February issue gave me quite a start. The true location of El Paso is adjacent to the Texas-Mexico border. That half-inch shift north into New Mexico represents about three hours by car.

Nancy McGuire

Silver Spring, Md.

Ross Douthat and

Jenny Woodson reply:

While the term “vigilante” isn’t as pejorative as True Seaborn suggests, we did misapply it in our article. The Minutemen are fulfilling a law-enforcement function, in a sense, by patrolling the border and reporting violations, but the group specifically enjoins its members not to enforce the laws on their own. We regret the error.

Regarding Nancy McGuire’s confusion: as the map key indicated, the “El Paso” label referred to the U.S. Border Patrol’s El Paso sector (which covers 125,000 square miles in New Mexico and west Texas), not the city itself.

A. Q. Khan

In investigating the developments treated at length by William Lange-wiesche in “The Point of No Return” (January/February *Atlantic*), I have benefited from the contributions and advice of many individuals, as well as from the

intellectual and economic freedom provided by the McGraw-Hill Companies and its Platts energy-information group. Editors Margaret Ryan, Michael Knapik, and Ann MacLachlan consistently backed up my judgment when I obtained important new data on secret programs in Brazil, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Pakistan, North Korea, and South Africa.

Some of the work that appeared in *Nucleonics Week* on September 1, 2005, under the headline “Pakistan Says Its Role in Probing Khan’s Proliferation Is Finished,” was done by Shahid-ur-Rehman Khan, our man in Islamabad and the author of a history of Pakistan’s nuclear program, *Long Road to Chagai*.

From 1989 until 1993, my probe of Iraq’s uranium-enrichment program involved collaboration with David Albright, now president of the Institute for Science and International Security in Washington, D.C. Much of the background of Mazhar Malik was unearthed by a superb U.K. Arabist, Alan George. My work on German nuclear trade was aided by Thomas Scheuer, now at *Focus* magazine and perhaps the best European reporter on economic crime, and by Robert Windrem, a producer at NBC and co-author of the book *Critical Mass*, published by Simon & Schuster.

Mark Hibbs

Editor Europe, Asia-Pacific

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Advice & Consent

The January/February issue contains a notice that reads, “Beginning with the March issue, the *Atlantic* Puzzler will be available online only.” No further explanation or reason is given. I’ve been subscribing for many years now, even when the Canadian dollar was worth a measly 62 cents American. A major reason for this allegiance has been the excellence of the puzzles created by Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon.

If you are indeed removing The Puzzler from the printed page, where it belongs, I must ask you to cancel my subscription and refund the cost of all remaining issues. Please do not say that you will be providing a dumbed-down

Sudoku puzzle instead. It’s frightening enough to see you comparing Garrison Keillor to Mark Twain.

W. O. Kummer

Halifax, Nova Scotia

Whence your decision to purge The Puzzler from the printed page and relegate it solely to the realm of cyberspace? Your choice to veil the puzzle from your full readership, as if it were a dotty aunt sequestered in the attic, strikes me as wrongheaded. Future solvers will no longer have the opportunity, as I did, to go to the local library, find back issues of the magazine, and discover the joy that Cox and Rathvon have provided us for three decades, and for which I offer my profuse thanks.

Surely you can spare one page out of 150 to continue this worthwhile tradition. In keeping with the spirit of the cryptic crossword, I beg you: “Think again!” cries drone, upset (10).

Ron Schaumburg

Teaneck, N.J.

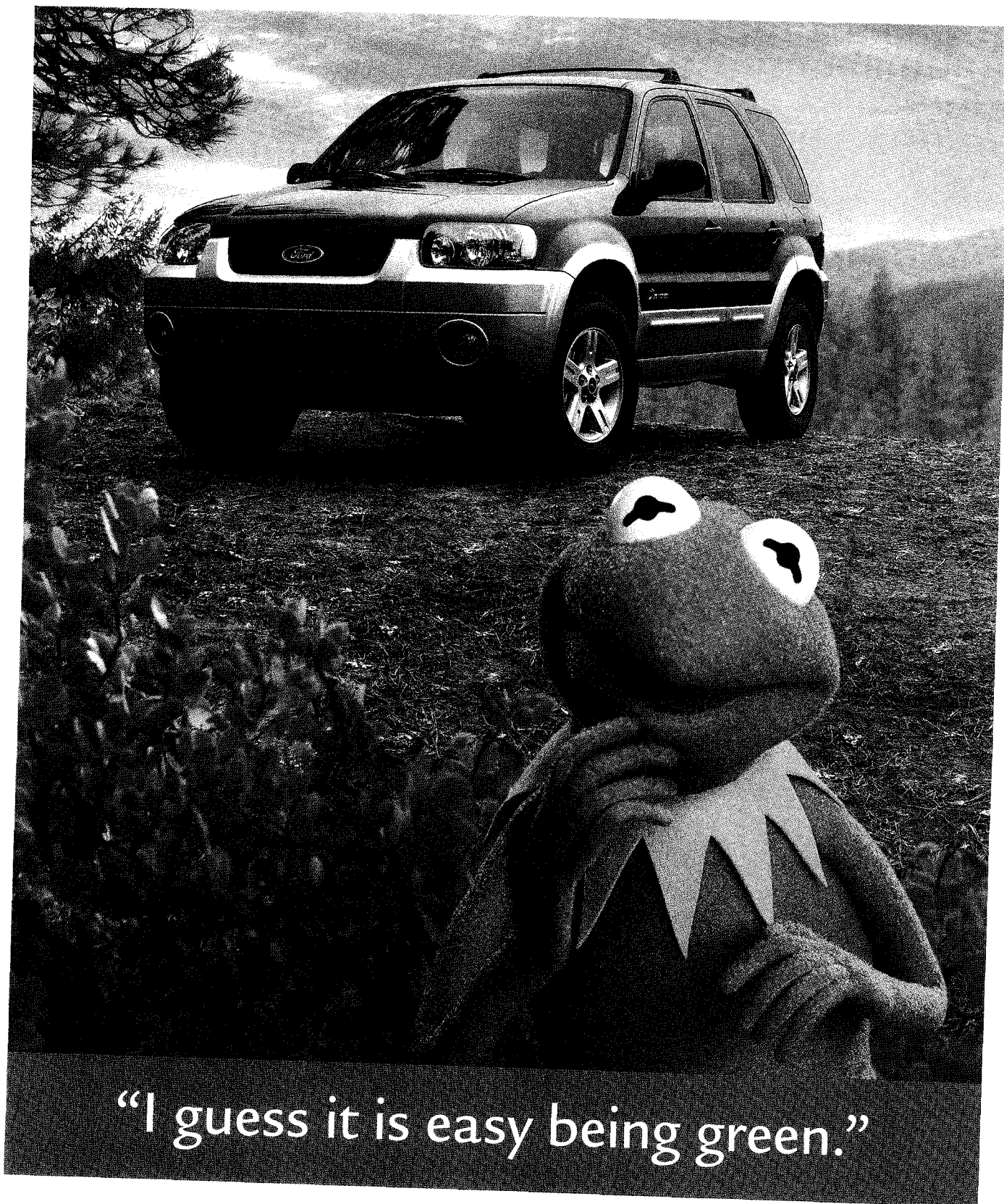
The infographic accompanying Steven Waldman and John C. Green’s article (“Tribal Relations,” January/February *Atlantic*) was misleading. Compare the circle representing Jews (1.9 percent of the electorate, according to the text) with the adjacent circle representing seculars (10.7 percent). Does the chart give the impression that there are nearly six times as many seculars? No. Instead of depicting the *areas* of the circles proportional to the relevant data, the authors make the *diameters* of the circles proportional. Indeed, the picture leaves us with the idea that the latter group is *thirty* times as numerous as the former because the ratio of the colored areas shown is about thirty to one. The fact that this misuse of two-dimensional figures is such a common error (see the classic *How to Lie With Statistics*, by Darrell Huff) does not make it any less deceptive.

Andrew Rich

North Manchester, Ind.

The editors reply:

Andrew Rich is absolutely right. We apologize for the error, which was our own, not that of Steven Waldman or John C. Green.



“I guess it is easy being green.”

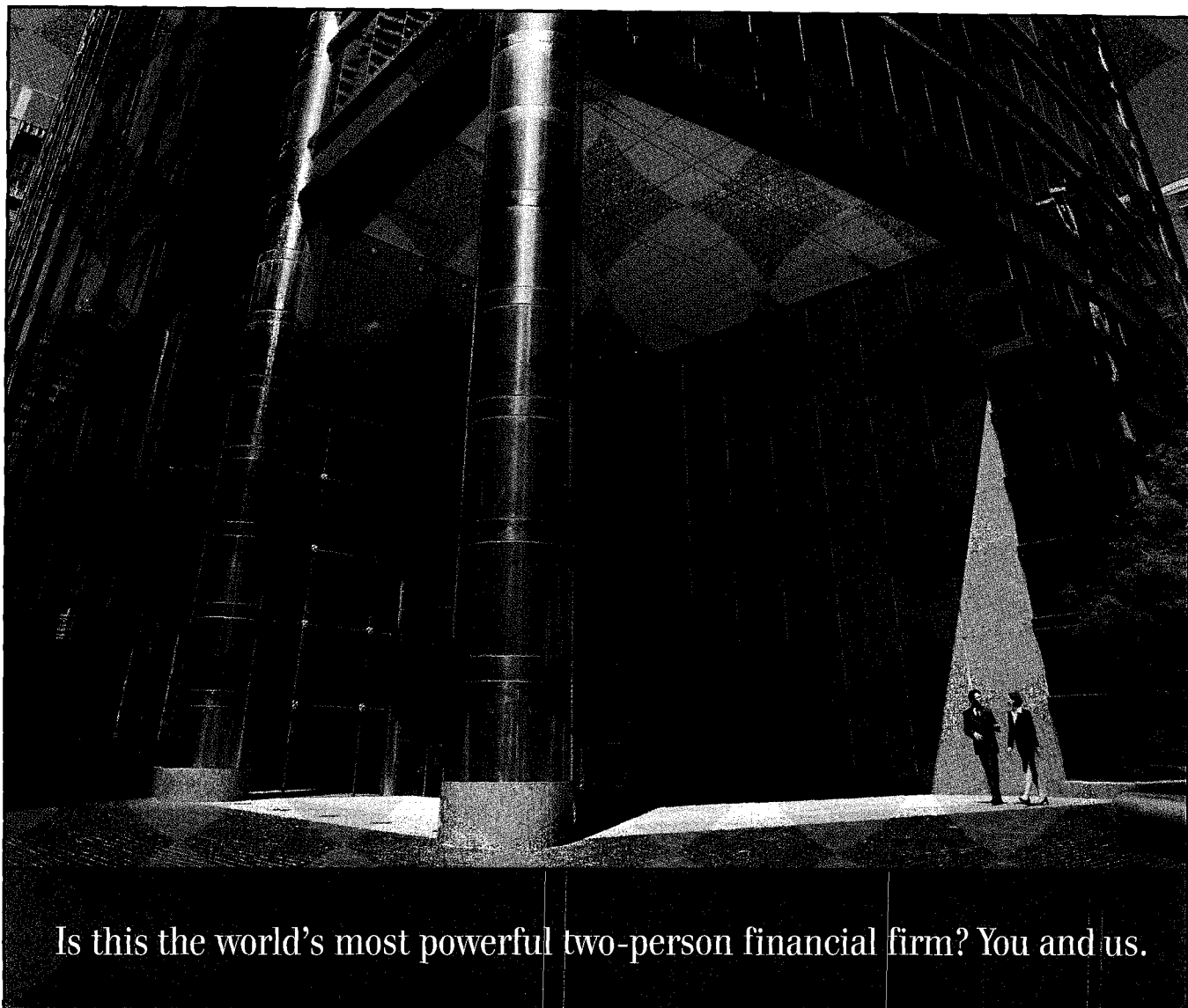
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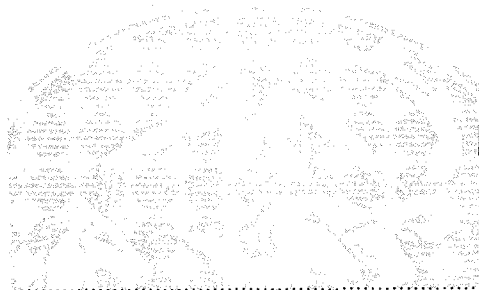
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COMMENT

The Man Who Would Be King

*George W. Bush threatens creeping autocracy unless Congress
and the courts act jointly—and forcefully—to stop him*

BY STUART TAYLOR JR.

Many of us mistook the steady expansion of civil liberties during the fifty-five years after World War II as a natural, inevitable, and essentially irreversible evolution. Then came 9/11, and with it the knowledge that suicidal infiltrators were eager and able to murder us by the thousands—unless we could catch them first.

So the battle was joined over whether and how to recalibrate the balance between liberty and security. The Patriot Act soon became its focal point, and a source of bitter debate. In fact the act's 156 sections were mostly reasonable, incremental, overdue enhancements of long-established investigative and surveillance powers. That's probably no accident: it was passed (and is being reauthorized with changes) by Congress after public debate, and in full public view. In short, it represents just the sort of rebalancing that should occur in a democracy struggling to reconcile competing, fundamental values.

But until recently, the scare rhetoric about that law has obscured a far more consequential development: the succession of claims by the Bush administration that the commander-in-chief has near-dictatorial powers to wage war against terrorists, at home as well as abroad—often in secret and certainly without public consent. Without consulting Congress, and in defiance of criminal laws, this administration has claimed (though not always used) powers that are arguably more sweeping than any since Lincoln's.

Lincoln had his reasons. In 1861, an advancing Confederate army, with important help from Confederate sympathizers in Baltimore, threatened Washington. In response, the president suspended the writ of habeas corpus to allow detention of suspected enemy agents, then defied a judicial ruling that this was unconstitutional. As the war ground on, his generals censored and confiscated newspapers, imprisoned editors, and imposed martial law. He unilaterally freed the slaves.

Of course, other presidents in between Lincoln and Bush have tested the limits of executive power. (Franklin Delano Roosevelt, to take an especially flagrant example, approved the herding of 110,000 Japanese-Americans into prison camps.) Several presidents have ordered unilateral military strikes.

But most of these men worked with Congress when feasible, as did Lincoln. George W. Bush prefers to act unilaterally—so much so, in fact, that avoidance of oversight seems at times to be his principal goal.

Just two weeks after 9/11, a then-little-known Bush Justice Department official named John Yoo penned a memo with a stunningly broad conclusion. Congress, Yoo declared, may not “place any limits on the President’s determinations as to any terrorist threat, the amount of military force to be used in response, or the method, timing, and nature of the response. These decisions, under our Constitution, are for the President alone to make.”

Since then, at the urging of Vice President Dick Cheney and his powerful aide, David Addington, administration lawyers have argued that Bush has the unilateral powers to:

- launch a major, pre-emptive invasion without congressional approval;
- order the indefinite detention of any and all people he alleges to be “enemy combatants” (including Americans seized on American soil) without due process or access to lawyers or courts;
- authorize indiscriminate torture to make such detainees talk, in defiance of international treaty obligations and a 1994 law making torture a crime;
- prosecute non-American detainees in “military commissions” devised by his administration, which offer defendants limited protections, no appeals outside the chain of command, and the prospect of execution; and
- order eavesdropping on Americans’ international telephone conversations with suspected al-Qaeda agents, without court warrants.

Some of these claims have been challenged. The Supreme Court curbed Bush’s powers to detain suspected enemies in 2004, requiring access to counsel and hearings for American detainees and access to federal courts for foreign detainees at Guantánamo Bay.

Congress, which has mostly slumbered through Bush’s relentless accretion of power, briefly roused itself late last year at the insistence of Senator John McCain. The “McCain Amendment” to a recent Pentagon funding bill limits brutal interrogation methods.

And a handful of Bush-appointed Justice Department lawyers have balked at the White House’s executive-

supremacy absolutism. Assistant Attorney General Jack Goldsmith, Deputy Attorney General James Comey, and others put their jobs on the line in late 2003 and 2004 by repudiating earlier Justice Department opinion letters on executive power, torture, and other matters.

But the White House’s retreats have been only tactical, and—unless pressure against the administration intensifies—they are likely to be temporary.

Adopting the narrowest possible interpretation of the decision giving Guantánamo Bay detainees access to federal courts, the administration now claims that while the detainees might be allowed to file a challenge in court, they have no rights for the courts to enforce.

In signing the McCain Amendment into law, Bush vowed to construe it “in a manner consistent with the constitutional authority of the president ... [and] the constitutional limitations on the judicial power.” Translation: I will comply with this law, except when I don’t.

Meanwhile, Goldsmith, Comey, and their allies have left the government. The principal executive supremacists—Cheney and David Addington—remain.

The Framers of the Constitution intended to make Congress—not the commander-in-chief—pre-eminent in matters of war. The Constitution gives Congress the powers to “declare War,” to “define and punish ... Offenses against the Law of Nations,” to “make Rules concerning Captures on Land and Water,” and more. George Washington, James Madison, and other Founders all stressed the primacy of Congress in these matters.

Today, the Supreme Court is widely seen as the principal check on presidential overreaching. But courts can decide only a few narrow issues as cases come before them, and cannot legislate detailed rules to restrain the president. What’s more, as the late Chief Justice William Rehnquist once wrote, the courts historically have shown “reluctance ... to decide a case against the government on an issue of national security during a war.”

That is, unless the courts see the president and Congress as being at odds. When Harry Truman tried to seize the

nation’s steel mills to prevent a strike during the Korean War, he did not get his way. Congress refused to authorize his request for seizure, and when he went ahead anyway, the Supreme Court slapped him down forcefully.

In a famous concurrence—cited by both Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Samuel Alito during their confirmation hearings as the touchstone of separation-of-powers analysis—Justice Robert Jackson wrote: “Presidential powers are not fixed but fluctuate depending on their disjunction or conjunction with those of Congress ... When the President takes measures incompatible with the expressed or implied will of Congress, his power is at its lowest ebb.” Jackson added, “No penance would ever expiate the sin against free government of holding that a President can escape control of executive powers by law through assuming his military role.”

That danger looms large today. In this war without apparent end, in which swift and decisive presidential action can be critical and new attacks could embolden presidents further, will we become habituated to creeping presidential autocracy? Will the number of Americans detained by the military as enemy combatants rise from two (so far), to 200, to 2,000, to 20,000 or more? Will this administration’s extreme claims, if they take root as precedent, eviscerate our system of checks and balances?

Much will depend on Roberts and Alito, but more will depend on Congress. Contrary to their partisan critics, the two Bush appointees are nobody’s patsies. But they know that courts have neither an electoral mandate nor the expertise to second-guess presidential claims of wartime necessity. If the Court is to be an effective check, it will need help.

“A crisis that challenges the president equally or perhaps primarily challenges Congress,” Justice Jackson wrote in an unpublished draft of his concurrence. “If it does not rise to its occasions, if it is petty, partisan, or indecisive[,] power will gravitate to the Executive by force of public opinion whether this Court affirms or not.” ■

Stuart Taylor Jr. is a National Journal columnist and Newsweek contributor.

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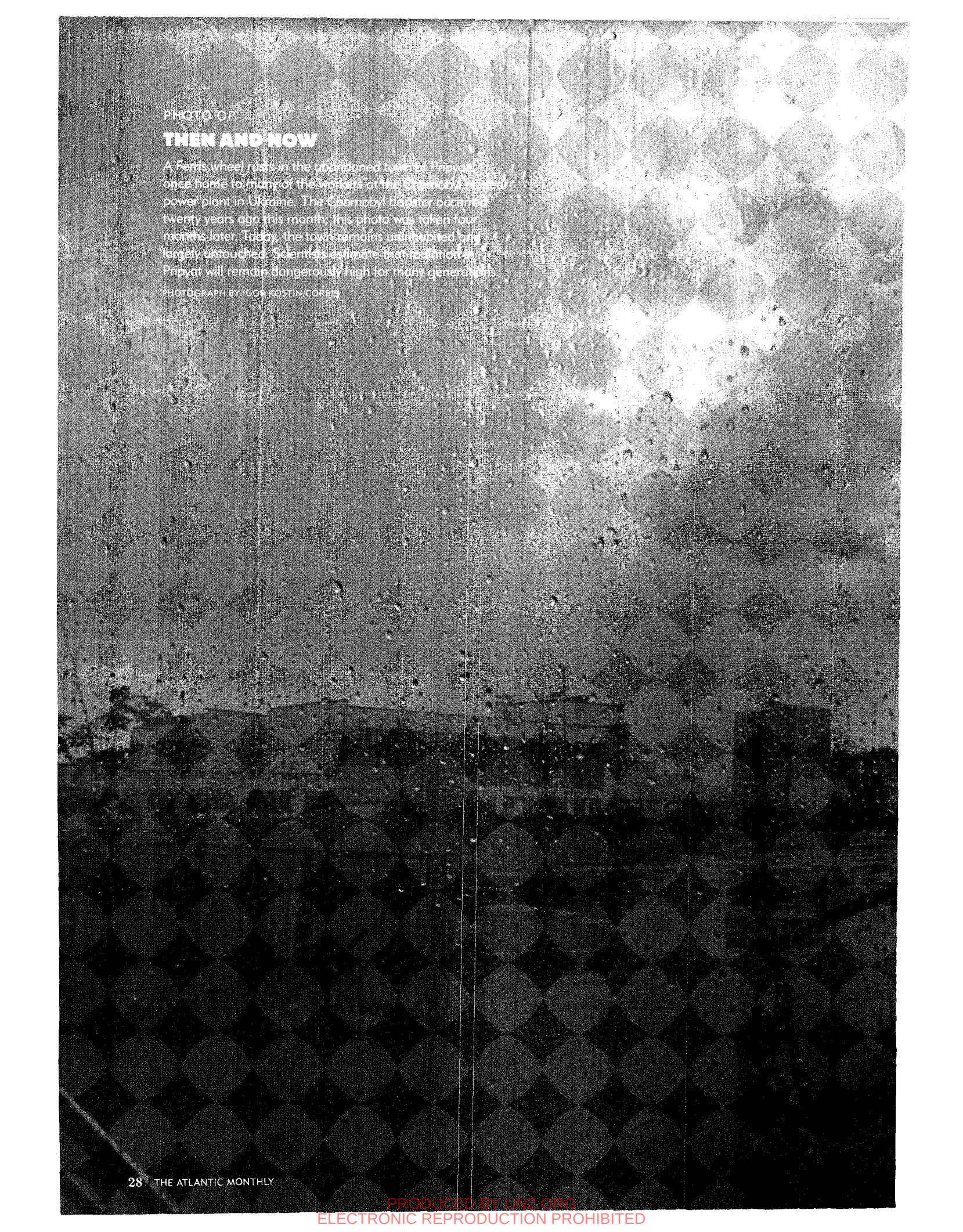


PHOTO OF

THEN AND NOW

A Ferris wheel rises in the abandoned town of Pripyat, once home to many of the workers at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Ukraine. The Chernobyl disaster occurred twenty years ago this month; this photo was taken four months later. Today, the town remains uninhabited and largely untouched. Scientists estimate that radiation in Pripyat will remain dangerously high for many generations.

PHOTOGRAPH BY IGOR KOSTIN/CORBIS



Poison Pill

Big, politically ugly changes to America's health-care system are unavoidable—consumer-driven health care may be the least-bad option

BY CLIVE CROOK

In every rich country, it seems, people expect too much of their health-care systems. That is why, in their different ways, they are disappointed—and why they always will be. Citizens everywhere desire unrestricted access to state-of-the-art technologies. Increasingly, they insist on choice and control, too. Yet they are unwilling to pay what those things cost. People demand as a right the best health care money can buy, delivered in the way that best suits them, expense be damned. All that, and the price must be affordable.

Nowhere can this self-contradictory demand be satisfied. Everywhere, therefore, health care presents itself to governments as their most difficult nonsecurity challenge. In the United States, the costs are already staggering, and unless something changes, they will only get worse. Such is the sensitivity, though, that only the bravest or most reckless policy makers stride up to the issue with a genuine intention to act. Health care is a political death trap.

Consider this: the government increases its spending on Medicare by tens of billions of dollars a year (as the administration did with its recent prescription-drug reform) and the *beneficiaries* are up in arms about it. Yes, the execution of the scheme was botched. Still, where else could generosity on such a scale actually arouse hostility, to say nothing of its apparent failure to buy votes? When Americans are asked what they think about health care, most say they like the quality of service (the government must do nothing to compromise those high standards); they also complain that health care is far too costly (the government must act).

Wherever you look, you find no plainly superior system. Countless variants—from the mainly government-run, single-provider, single-payer model at one extreme to America's semi-private,

multi-provider, multi-payer approach at the other—have been tried. None is widely popular. Canada, did somebody say? You must be joking. Rationing and gaps in coverage, necessary instruments of cost control in that system, are at the limit of what people will accept: they were an issue in the recent election, and helped get the previous government thrown out. Britain's National Health Service, once the country's pride, is today renowned for dirty hospitals that make you sicker than you were to begin with. (Private health insurance, with its higher costs and standards, is popular there; a two-tier system, one for haves and another for have-nots,



quite at odds with the founding principles of the NHS, is firmly in place.)

Of course, the world's national health systems have more in common than you might think. Almost all of them are hybrids, mixing public and private. In statist Canada, some 30 percent of health spending is privately financed. In supposedly free-market America, well over 40 percent is taxpayer financed, and the privately financed part is intensely regulated—hardly a case of “leaving it to market forces.” But the fact remains: many blueprints have been tried; all have drawbacks, and all leave users complaining about standards or costs, or both.

Here is a basic principle: if costs are to be better controlled, some medical services must be either forgone

or denied. The key question: Who decides? Top-down rationing—as in Britain's health service—is one approach. Consumer-driven health care—where patients decide for themselves what they can afford—is another.

In the United States, where almost all privately financed health care is provided by employers through tax-sheltered insurance plans, *neither* of these curbing mechanisms is in place. There is no government monopoly, and, with employers paying for their insurance, most patients need not concern themselves much with the cost of their treatments. The result is that this country spends more per person on health care than any other—15 percent of the national income, compared with a rich-country average of 9 percent.

This enormous extra cost doubtless saves or significantly improves many lives. It supports a remarkable pace of innovation. And nothing is wrong in principle with a country spending proportionally more of its income on health care as it gets richer. But the system includes plenty of waste. It delivers services that cost more to provide than they would be worth to the patient if the patient were paying. And millions of Americans with low-paying jobs have no insurance: their employer does not provide it, they cannot afford to buy their own, and they are not poor enough to qualify for Medicaid. So America's health outcomes, in the aggregate, are only fair by international standards, and are not nearly as good as they should be, given what the country spends.

The administration and the economists it listens to want to control costs by mobilizing consumers. If the tax advantage for employer-provided insurance were removed or offset, and if more people bought their own policies, Americans would lean more toward plans with low premiums and plenty of cost-sharing (high deductibles and high co-payments). In this way, health insurance would be more like real insurance—a protection against serious financial risk—and less akin to a utility payment plan. Patient-consumers would have the incentive they lack at present to force costs down. The administration has proposed some reforms with this notion in mind.

This kind of approach draws two objections—one largely false (though

widely advanced), the other valid. The false objection is that patients are too ignorant to be intelligent consumers of medical services. It is all too complicated, this argument goes. Necessary health expenditures would be cut as well as unnecessary ones. Some even question whether there is any such thing as an unnecessary health expenditure. It is not as though people go to the doctor for fun, they point out; people do it only when they have to. If you restrict access by directly confronting people with the costs, their health will suffer.

Well, such evidence as there is says that when patients have to pay a direct share of health-care costs, they do buy fewer medical services—but also that the effect of this on health outcomes is small. This was the principal finding of the RAND Health Insurance Experiment of the 1970s and early 1980s, still the largest health-policy study ever conducted in the United States. (Its findings are often quoted, but not always accurately.) One of the researchers, in a summary of the results on the RAND Web site, put it like this: “The additional care with free care may have had little marginal value besides relief of temporary anxiety and symptoms. In fact, free care led to more self-reported diseases and worry, especially among the initially well and rich ... There seems to be little [health] cost to increasing cost sharing within the range studied by the experiment and enormous potential savings.”

Patients, given a reason, buy wisely. Is that so surprising? The truth is, buyers are at an informational disadvantage to sellers almost every time a deal—any deal—is struck. But they understand this, do their homework (if the transaction justifies the effort), and find ways of mitigating the problem, whether they are buying a car, a home, a college education, or an operation to remove a mole. Health-care professionals have a vested interest (15 percent of the gross domestic product) in insisting that health is special. In this respect it is not, or at any rate not as different as the argument implies. In all likelihood, making America’s health-care market work better—more like other markets, in other words—would succeed in restraining costs, maybe quite significantly, without

making health outcomes much worse. And people value the ability to make choices for themselves as a good thing in its own right.

People who can afford to, that is. The valid objection to consumer-guided health care—the issue that its advocates have to address, and that they are reluctant to—is not the “informational asymmetry” so emphasized by health-care economists but basic equity. Taxpayer-funded universal health-care systems are hugely redistributive. Many treatments, especially for chronic conditions, are simply unaffordable for people of modest means (but not poor enough, yet, to qualify for Medicaid). Low-cost private insurance is only a partial answer to this. Costs will continue to push premiums up, most likely faster than low incomes will rise. Also, many illnesses make such patients uninsurable—and insurers are getting better at identifying propensities to such illnesses before they strike.

In the United States, only the wealthy can be sure that an expensive health emergency or chronic illness will not ruin them financially. For people of ordinary means, “insurance” against that kind of catastrophe can be provided only by the state, with health care seen as part of a wider, more ambitious, and correspondingly more expensive social-welfare system. If things continue as they have been, the need to contain health-care outlays—by much-resented government order, express or implied, not through individual ability to pay—would of course remain. So here is the un-American alternative: much higher public spending; much higher taxes; lower standards of health care, most likely, for the insured majority; far more generous protection, on the other hand, for the uninsured and the unlucky.

The whole thing is political poison, of course, but as costs keep rising, something will eventually have to give. The present system is on course to be unaffordable and to let too many people down, and the closer you get to the single-payer socialized alternative, the less appealing it looks. Consumer-driven health care, supplemented with generous subsidies for those with low incomes, is at least worth a try. ▀

Clive Crook is a senior editor of The Atlantic.

THE ODDS

BOMBING IRAN

This January, Iran announced that it would resume uranium-enrichment research, breaking an agreement set more than two years ago with several European powers. After a series of breakdowns in negotiations—and increasingly bellicose rhetoric from the new president of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad—the move was widely perceived as an indication that Iran has decided to pursue nuclear weapons, whatever the consequences. U.S. and Israeli officials have publicly refused to rule out a military solution. When might such an attack—by the United States or Israel—take place? Here are the odds set by tradesports.com earlier this year, just after Iran resumed enrichment research, along with some factors the site’s bettors may (or may not) be considering. —TERRENCE HENRY

4:1 Overt Air Strike by the United States or Israel by June 30, 2006.

By this date, the United Nations Security Council may have only recently enacted sanctions, such as travel bans or freezing the assets of Iranians associated with the nuclear program. More important, neither the United States nor Israel is likely to risk a strike in the midst of an election year. Israel will have only recently voted in a new parliament, and the United States will be mere months away from midterm elections.

3:1 Overt Air Strike by the United States or Israel by December 31, 2006.

The November elections will be over in the United States, and a new government will be firmly in place in Israel. But the two powers may continue to defer to the international community, and wait to assess whether sanctions and diplomacy curb Iran’s ambitions.

2:1 Overt Air Strike by the United States or Israel by March 31, 2007.

If Iran continues to make progress toward nuclear weapons capability, despite heavy international pressure, a surgical military strike against one of its key facilities—such as the uranium-enrichment plant in Natanz or the uranium-conversion facility in Isfahan—would become more politically feasible. Analysts at the Eurasia Group, an international consulting firm, predict that surgical strikes are likely “by the [United States] or Israel during the first quarter of 2007.”

WASHINGTON

Jock Itch

Lynn Swann's run for governor shows why political pros are big fans of star athletes

BY JOSHUA GREEN

As intense as politics can get, few candidates are experienced in encountering throngs of screaming, face-painted partisans. Bill O'Reilly they can suit up for—but not tens of thousands of rabid Pittsburgh Steelers fans, and not in a Super Bowl where the pride of an entire state hinges on their performance. So it was with an ease uncommon in a political novice that Lynn Swann—Hall of Fame wide receiver for the Steelers, MVP of Super Bowl X, and now first-time Republican candidate for governor of Pennsylvania—recently arrived at a Sheraton in Harrisburg to address the state troopers association as his campaign got under way.

Swann strode into the gathering from the back of the room, and the advantage of his stardom was immediately apparent. As he was announced, a hun-

dred or so burly necks swiveled in unison to gaze at the man canonized after Super Bowl X as “the Baryshnikov of football” for his acrobatic receptions, and for a moment, the no-nonsense visage issued to state troopers along with the badge and gun gave way to schoolboy thrill and awe. It was an extra stroke of luck for Swann that the current Steelers team had just reached the Super Bowl, whipping the state into a frenzy and prompting a rival campaign manager to complain that Swann was getting a “Steeler bounce.”

At fifty-four, Swann looks at least a decade younger. His second incarnation as a sports broadcaster has taught him valuable skills: he is impeccably dressed, gracious, and self-deprecating. But he is also far from being a Hall of Fame politi-

cian. In delivering his remarks, the leading Republican candidate for governor could do no better than muster a call for “real, productive change” and “real fixes for real problems,” and invoke the need to “move forward, not backward” while applying “basic common sense to the commonwealth”—this last apparently a favorite, because he used it several times that day. No platform to push, no proposed direction for the state more precise than “forward,” and little evident familiarity with the issues.

Swann, in other words, had nothing of substance to offer—not necessarily a disqualifying handicap in politics, though normally a discomfiting one, especially in such an important race. But instead of causing alarm, Swann's performance has so far thrilled the party establishment: recent polls show him tying or beating the incumbent Democratic governor, Ed Rendell.

Political professionals find a lot to like about athletes in general, and Swann in particular. Along with the usual advantages of wealth, fame, and telegenic presence, Swann is a black Republican in a big state, which lends him a sort of MVP status in the party. The GOP has tried for years to attract minorities, without much success. Swann's example, along with that of prominent former Representative J. C. Watts, a standout quarterback at the University of Oklahoma, suggests that athletic heroes are one of the few talent pools that could realistically yield minority candidates for the GOP. More broadly, Swann represents a new breed of sports star that is particularly well suited to campaigning—and thus appeals to both parties.

Plenty of athletes have come to politics before Swann, of course. They include Bill Bradley (NBA) and Jim Bunning (MLB) in the Senate; Watts, Steve Largent (NFL), and Tom McMillen (NBA) in the House; and Jack Kemp (NFL), who was a congressman and Cabinet secretary before he was Bob Dole's vice-presidential nominee. Most were elected in an era when sports stars rarely had qualifications beyond their record of winning on the playing field, and weren't expected to. Swann is more typical of the modern professional ath-

lete, whose career demands are moving ever closer to those of a professional politician. In recent years, successful athletes have become the public faces of sports franchises and companies whose products they endorse, expected to deftly navigate an aggressive and unrelenting media not just in the locker room on game day but in the broader community at all times. Today's franchise athletes are also expected to be publicly involved in community service (some teams even stipulate it in contracts), and anyone who isn't is considered a lout. It's no coincidence that in his candidate guise, Swann touts his experience on the board of Big Brothers Big Sisters before his pass-catching abilities, and his chairmanship of President Bush's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports before his broadcast career.

A certain political fiction has to exist in order for athletes, or any celebrities, to get elected to offices for which many of them lack even the most basic qualifications: it's the idea that celebrity status equips them to govern. Usually it works. In the few instances where this fiction has been pierced and voters have scrutinized a sports star, the athlete usually loses. No one demonstrated this more clearly than stock-car legend Richard Petty, who sought the surprisingly modest office of secretary of state in NASCAR-mad North Carolina. “The King” campaigned only rarely, was ticketed for aggressive driving shortly before the election, and ultimately got passed at the finish line.

Swann seems unlikely to make such missteps. But his arrival at the Pennsylvania statehouse is hardly assured. Later that day, as he was crossing the street, Swann was spotted by a local news crew camped outside City Hall. The eager crew, festooned with Steelers paraphernalia, hustled over to request an interview that surely would have made the evening news—the kind of free publicity no candidate with an ounce of savvy would refuse. But Swann declined, saying he was late for a meeting. Even if he occasionally fumbles, though, his star status might save him. In situations both routine and tough, other news crews could cut him the same break this one did: lower its cameras, thank him, and let him go on his way. ▀

Joshua Green is a senior editor of The Atlantic.



Worse Than Iraq?

Nigeria's president and onetime hope for a stable future is leading his country toward implosion—and possible U.S. military intervention

BY JEFFREY TAYLER

With an ethnically and religiously combustible population of 130 million, Nigeria is lurching toward disaster, and the stakes are high—for both Nigeria and the United States. An OPEC member since 1971, Nigeria has 35.9 billion barrels of proven petroleum reserves—the largest of any African country and the eighth largest on earth. It exports some 2.5 million barrels of oil a day, and the government plans to nearly double that amount by 2010. Nigeria is the fifth-largest supplier of oil to the United States; U.S. energy officials predict that within ten years it and the Gulf of Guinea region will provide a quarter of America's crude.

It is hardly surprising, then, that since 9/11 the Bush administration has courted Nigeria as an alternative to volatile petro-states in the Middle East and Latin America. In 2002, the White House declared the oil of Africa (five other countries on the continent are also key producers) a “strategic national interest”—meaning that the United States would use military force, if necessary, to protect it. In short, Nigeria's troubles could become America's and, like those of the Persian Gulf, cost us dearly in blood and money.

Moreover, Nigeria's problems far exceed those of the petro-states the administration hopes to sidestep. They begin with the ad hoc nature and impossible structure of the country, which even a leading Nigerian nationalist called “a mere geographical expression.” The entity of Nigeria was cobbled together to serve London's economic interests. Having established the Royal Niger Company to exploit resources in the Niger River Delta, and expanded inland from there, the British found themselves by the late nineteenth century ruling territories and peoples—some 250 ethnic groups in all—that had never coexisted in a single state. They ran Nigeria as three separate admin-



istrative zones, divided along ethnic and religious lines. The Muslim north, arid and poor but with half the country's population, would eventually gain supremacy over the army. Through a succession of military dictatorships, it would dominate (and plunder) the fertile and oil-rich but disunited south, whose largest ethnic groups—the Yoruba in the west and the Igbo in the east—together represent just 39 percent of the population. Democracy, too, has favored the north, which, united by Islam and voting as a bloc, has determined the outcome of virtually all elections. In Nigeria, where one generally votes for one's religious or ethnic brethren, democracy has deepened divisions rather than healed them. Whoever holds the presidency faces an insoluble dilemma: either let the country break up, or use violence to hold it together.

Chief among the country's current woes is corruption. During the last twenty-five years, Nigeria earned more than \$300 billion in oil revenues—but annual per capita income plummeted from \$1,000 to \$390. More than two-thirds of the population lives beneath the poverty line, subsisting on less than a dollar a day. The country's elites bear most of the blame. Since Nigeria gained independence, in 1960, its rulers—military and civilian alike—have systematically squandered or stolen some \$400 billion in government money. According to a 2004 World Bank report, 80 percent of the country's oil wealth accrues to 1 percent of the population.

As the journalist Karl Maier, whose *This House Has Fallen* stands as the authoritative work on modern Nigeria, has put it, Nigeria is a “criminally mismanaged corporation where the bosses are armed and have barricaded themselves inside the company safe.” Nigeria's similarities to Saudi Arabia are manifold: corruption, oil wealth, a burgeoning Muslim population, and value to the United States as an energy supplier. Osama bin Laden has called Nigeria “ripe for liberation.”

The “ripening” began soon after what seemed the dawn of a new era: the sudden death, in 1998, of the military dictator Sani Abacha and the subsequent election to the presidency of the retired general Olusegun Obasanjo. Now sixty-nine and in his second term, Obasanjo had been imprisoned by Abacha in 1995 for allegedly plotting a coup; he emerged from prison in 1998 a national hero.

In a country where ethnicity trumps citizenship, religion trumps ethnicity, and power trumps religion, Obasanjo seemed the ideal compromise candidate. As a Yoruba, he would placate the most prominent and progressive ethnic group in the southwest. As a Christian, he would appeal to 40 percent of Nigerians (also largely in the south). As a professional soldier, he had clout in the north as well, and would be able to restrain the military and forestall any uprisings by out-of-power generals. And as a democrat of international repute (he is a former candidate for United Nations secretary-general and a friend of Nelson Mandela and Jimmy Carter), he would convert Nigeria from the pariah state left behind by Abacha into an internationally respected regional power.

Sixty-two percent of Nigerians voted for Obasanjo in 1999, giving him a hefty mandate and showing that he had indeed won support outside his own ethnic and religious groups. He immediately set about undoing, or appearing to undo, the legacy of nearly three decades of mostly military rule. Announcing that he was “fully committed to using all appropriate means and resources to ensure that every man, woman, and child will perceive and reap the benefits of democracy,” he established a commission to investigate allegations of corruption. However, nothing substantive has resulted—except that

the commission has accused Obasanjo himself of taking bribes.

Obasanjo thickened the bureaucracy by setting up offices to track government expenditures, again with few results. He established a panel to review past human-rights violations, but the principal presumed offenders, three of Nigeria's former military rulers, have refused to testify—evidence that the army remains above the law. He pledged to diversify the economy along International Monetary Fund guidelines, which entailed cutting state subsidies to the fuel sector. This proved a singularly unpopular move, because it eliminated the only dividend ordinary Nigerians have ever received from their country's oil wealth: cheap gas at the pump. General strikes ensued, turning violent at times, and the economic reforms stalled. Obasanjo's few genuine achievements—among them allowing more freedom of the press and winning forgiveness for 60 percent of the country's \$30 billion foreign debt—have failed to alleviate his people's misery.

Obasanjo has shown scant appetite for tackling the crime, neglect, and inefficiency rampant in the oil sector. "Bunkering"—tapping into pipelines and siphoning oil into makeshift tankers hidden in the swamps of the Niger River Delta—is widespread; it is responsible for the loss of some 200,000 barrels a day and for catastrophic fires that have incinerated locals attempting to scoop up the runoff. Criminal gangs with government connections are said to be behind the practice—who else could hire the needed equipment?

During his first term, Obasanjo established a development commission to distribute oil revenues among the country's indigenous peoples, but its efforts have come to naught; most of the windfall oil profits of the last few years have gone toward refurbishing mansions for the elite. Oil spills and gas flares blight the delta, ruining farmland and poisoning fishing grounds. Owing to the abysmal state of its few refineries, Nigeria remains an importer of gasoline. Officials divert gas from the pumps and sell it on the black market. Fuel shortages are endemic.

Obasanjo still talks of improving the lot of his people, but his rhetoric hardly sounds over the din of mayhem and rage.

Nigeria appears to be de-developing, its hastily erected facade of modernity disintegrating and leaving city dwellers in particular struggling to survive in near-apocalyptic desolation. A drive across Lagos—the country's commercial capital and, with 13 million people, Africa's largest metropolis—reveals unmitigated chaos. The government has left roads to decay indefinitely. Thugs clear away the broken asphalt and then extract payments from drivers, using chunks of rubble to enforce their demands. Residents dig up the pavement to lay cables that tap illegally into state power lines. Armed robbers emerge from the slums to pillage cars stuck in gridlocks (aptly named "hold-ups" in regional slang) so impenetrable that the fourteen-mile trip from the airport to the city center can take four hours. Electricity blackouts of six to twelve hours a day are common. "Area boys" in loosely affiliated gangs dominate most of the city, extorting money from drivers and shop owners. Those who fail to pay up may be beaten or given a knife jab in the shoulder.

The U.N. Human Development Index ranks Nigeria as having one of the worst standards of living, below both Haiti and Bangladesh. For all its oil wealth, and after seven years of governance by one of Africa's most highly touted democrats, Nigeria has become the largest failed state on earth.

Obasanjo claims to have been born again in prison, and he is prone to wearing his religion on his sleeve—a matter of controversy in a country that is half Muslim and nearly half Christian. He has exhorted Nigerians to "return to God," and many have done so, though not as he intended. Following the death of Abacha, a Muslim, the northern twelve of Nigeria's thirty-six states, acting against the constitution, imposed sharia. Many Christians in those states rioted. When asked about the role of sharia in the country's sectarian violence, Obasanjo (apparently unwilling to risk confrontation with the Muslims and, by extension, the military), said only, "Sharia is for the Muslims as the Ten Commandments [are] for a Christian."

The religious tensions commingle with ethnic ones. Obasanjo has lifted many dictatorial strictures on daily life,

but in the absence of effective security forces, this has only heightened clashes among the populace. During his rule, the most lethal period of unrest in the country's history, more than 10,000 people have died. One of the worst zones of conflict is the Niger River Delta in the south, the site of most of Nigeria's mainland petroleum reserves. In recent years, numerous attacks by militias under the rebel leader Alhaji Dokubo-Asari have forced multinationals (against whom Dokubo-Asari has promised "all-out war") to cease pumping, causing oil prices on the world market to spike. Threats also emanate from the north, one of the most radicalized areas of Muslim black Africa.

The security forces that Nigerians expected Obasanjo to bring to heel still act as a caste unto themselves, extorting and killing with impunity. Armed robbers outgun the police, who receive their salaries months late. Many officers have turned to releasing accused criminals from jail in return for bribes. Citizens seeking revenge have murdered police officers and soldiers, whose comrades have undertaken murderous reprisals. Obasanjo has adopted a malignant policy of laissez-faire, saying, "The military should not be pampered, but the military should not be bashed." Across much of the country, anarchy reigns.

Rumors are circulating that Obasanjo may seek a third term in next year's elections, although he is constitutionally prohibited from doing so. Whether or not he stays on, his country's troubles may eventually entangle the United States. One particularly ominous scenario looms: rebels may succeed in halting oil extraction in the delta, drying up the revenues on which the northern elites depend. If, in response, a northern Muslim general were to oust the president and seize power, the United States would find itself facing an Islamic population almost five times Saudi Arabia's, radicalized and in control of the abundant oil reserves that America has vowed to protect. Should that day come, it could herald a military intervention far more massive than the Iraqi campaign. ■

Jeffrey Taylor is a correspondent for The Atlantic and the author of Angry Wind: Through Muslim Black Africa by Bus, Truck, Boat, and Camel.

MAN'S MIND STRETCHED TO A NEW IDEA
NEVER RETURNS TO ITS ORIGINAL DIMENSIONS
-oliver wendell holmes

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Gingrich's Long Game

The former speaker of the House is looking for a second act. Will he get it?

BY ROSS DOUTHAT

At first you call him "Mr. Gingrich." But no one else does. The handlers and the well-wishers and the television hosts call him "the speaker" or "Mr. Speaker." As in, "Has the speaker had his makeup yet?" Or, "Mr. Speaker, you probably don't remember me, but ..." Or, "Mr. Speaker, welcome back to the show." It's like a judgeship, or the presidency: once seized, the title is good for life.

Everyone in Washington, though, calls him "Newt." His aide calls him Newt. His Web site is newt.org, his e-mail address is newt@newt.org, and his e-mails announce things like "Newt's on *The O'Reilly Factor* tonight!" When you follow him into the bowels of Fox News in New York, where there are six twentysomethings to a cubicle and all of the producers want him on their show, the first person to catch sight of him shouts gleefully, "Give 'em hell, Newt!"

So you call him Newt—and, like his old rival Hillary, he needs no other introduction, even though it's been nearly eight years since the coup that ended his Republican Revolution. Since then, Newt has been doing business, the people's and his own, in the way of many former politicians—in his own case, overseeing the Center for Health Transformation, a Washington-based health-care coalition for companies interested in Washington-style networking; joining other ex-pols like Gary Hart and George Mitchell to study national-security policy and United Nations reform; and finding time to co-author an alternative-history trilogy about a Southern victory at Gettysburg and its aftermath, while posting enough reviews on Amazon—139 at last count—to qualify as a "Top 1000 reviewer."

He's gone a little more to fat: never svelte, his body now is made for televi-

sion, where the chest-up camera angles conceal the stomach that, like his reputation, precedes him into every room. And he's mellowed, if you believe the press he gets these days—making nice with Hillary, talking up bipartisanship, criticizing Republican excess.

But he's more an exile than a retiree: his Web site resembles an ideas lab for a shadow government, brimming with policy proposals and white papers, and he's ubiquitous on the talk-show circuit, where the Abramoff scandal has brought his theme of congressional corruption round again, this time with his own party (and his old GOP rival Tom



DeLay) in the crosshairs. And he has a book out, *Winning the Future*, that reads like a campaign manifesto, complete with—did you ever doubt it?—a "21st Century Contract With America."

He gets around, too. When you catch up with him on a December morning in Manhattan, he's just flown in from Nashville, and he'll be leaving for Providence immediately after dinner, driving late into the night for a 7:30 a.m. breakfast on health-care policy with Rhode

Island's governor, Donald Carcieri, and one of its representatives, Patrick Kennedy. In the intervening twelve hours, there will be a lunchtime meeting with *The Wall Street Journal's* editorial board and a dinner with Pfizer executives—and between these events you'll interview him, and so will *Face the Nation*, and Fox's Neil Cavuto, and finally Charlie Rose. In each of these conversations, he will wave off questions about 2008, but with the Cheshire Cat coyness of someone who really wants to run.

He insists, of course, that he's content as a private citizen. "If I never achieve public office again," he tells you, "I will have had an *amazing* life." At the time, you believe him, up to a point. But you don't believe him later, when he tells Rose that he would prefer not to run for president, and that "you can't be both a carrier of big ideas and a carrier of personal ambition." Because surely if anyone has spent his life disproving that maxim, it's Newt Gingrich.

Before *The WSJ* and CBS and Fox and PBS, there is NYU, Newt's first stop in the city. Here he's the one doing the interviewing, talking with a professor of public administration named Dennis Smith about CompStat, the computerized system that helped revolutionize New York's crime fighting during the 1990s. This is Newt's ideal environment, perhaps: the PowerPoint presentation and the fast-talking professor, the mix of management-speak and detailed data. And CompStat provides a perfect Newt narrative: a triumph of good government over bad bureaucracy; a lesson that, with the right flowcharts and the right incentives and the right technology, anything is possible.

Before CompStat, few NYC precincts had computers. Crime data was sent to headquarters to be analyzed, and wasn't returned for months. The post of precinct commander, meanwhile, was either a stepping-stone or a sinecure. With CompStat, data was analyzed in real time; precincts could deploy personnel based on the most up-to-date information; commanders were called

to account—and crime fell, and fell, and fell, until the ungovernable city was the safest big city in the nation.

This is a story, and a principle—the benefits of localizing government, and of building accountability and incentives into it, and of dragging it, kicking and screaming if need be, into the Information Age—that Newt carries with him into nearly every encounter and address. Most politicians have a stump speech; Newt has a handout and a reading list (it includes Peter Drucker's *Effective Executive* and Michael Lewis's *Moneyball*). Most politicians talk about which programs they want to expand and which they want to cut; Newt talks about Wal-Mart and Travelocity, FedEx and self-service gas stations. And with every topic he takes up, he circles back to the idea that our government doesn't work anymore, that it *can't* work, that it's as outdated as a nineteenth-century clerk "dipping his pen into an inkwell."

This isn't just a repackaged version of the GOP's old-time small-government religion, though. Newt likes to call his vision "21st Century Intelligent, Effective, Limited Government," but when there isn't space for the whole phrase, "Limited" is dropped. Transforming the public sector saves us money, he insists, but in the Newt agenda, all of that money could be spent—on a "LearnStat" or a "HealthStat"; on military and intelligence services; on grants and tax breaks for research and development; on monitoring the weight of potentially diabetic grade-schoolers. He's no less a big-government conservative than George W. Bush, in a way—he just has a better idea of what he wants government to do.

None of this is surprising. Newt's true ideology has always been futurism, rather than a more traditional conservatism, and it's when he talks about what's next that he really comes alive—as at a recent Capitol Hill lunch with Iowa officials, where someone asks about virtual-reality research at Iowa State University and Newt goes on a riff about putting grade-schoolers in a "360-degree virtual-reality space" to prepare them for the world of tomorrow.

This is the Newt who can sound like a visionary—and a crank. His real doppelgänger may be not Bill Clinton, to whom

he often feels umbilically bound—the great 1990s rivals, both smart and southern and prematurely white-haired—but Al Gore, another wonk and futurist who was overshadowed by "the Man from Hope." Newt shares Gore's brains and big ideas, his commitment to reinventing government, his attention to

What's more, he must know it. "I'm a historian," he likes to say; he surely understands how hard it would be to return from exile, especially when so many people remember him as the man who shut down the government because Bill Clinton snubbed him on Air Force One.

Newt insists that he's content as a private citizen. He waves off questions about 2008, but with the Cheshire Cat coyness of someone who really wants to run.

policy detail. And he shares his weaknesses as well: the speeches that feel like lectures, the absence of the common touch, and the tendency toward self-importance. Both men are easy targets for a press corps that likes its politicians folksy and its sound bites glib, and both sometimes deserve the scorn. When Newt shows the Iowans a flowchart leading from "Current Ineffective Bureaucracies" to "Vision of Desired Future," and adds that he hopes to "invent a system" to move from the one to the other, it's easy to hear the tinny echo of Gore taking the credit for "creating the Internet."

But after six years of Bushian incuriosity, maybe the country—or at least the GOP—could use a little wonkish zeal and a few more politicians interested in precinct-level police tactics. Has any other Washington politician, I ask Professor Smith, come to see him about his CompStat research?

The answer is no—just Newt.

Still, Newt probably can't be president. The insiders know it: last December, when *National Journal* asked 100 Republican bigwigs to rank the '08 field, Newt came in ninth, just behind George Pataki. His former colleagues know it: the columnist Robert Novak recently reported that Newt has been approaching old allies to support an '08 bid, but finding no takers. And the public knows it: Newt hovers around 10 percent in polls of likely GOP voters, and in one he led all comers as the candidate respondents would definitely *not* vote for.

In the flush of his early power, he favored grand historical analogies: he liked to bring up FDR, or Atatürk, or James Clavell's Toranaga, the fictionalized founder of Japan's Tokagawa shogunate. So I ask him for an analogy to his current position—the former speaker seeking a second act, the man with an expansive vision for change but no obvious way of selling it.

At first he demurs. But ultimately he can't resist the question. He proposes Jean Monnet, who fathered the European Union without ever holding elected office. He describes how George Washington retired to private life after the Revolution and was deaf to political entreaties for years, until a call came that he couldn't ignore. He mentions Charles de Gaulle too, and Winston Churchill—each summoned back to save his nation in an hour of need. And Ronald Reagan, the oldest president we've ever had. "He played a very long game," Newt remarks. "He started calling communism evil in 1948. And forty years later, the Berlin Wall came down."

If you trade in big ideas, he adds a moment later, "you have to be a very long-range player." This has always been the secret of Newt's success: the willingness to take the long view, as when he imagined in 1980 that he would conquer Congress, and then finished the job fifteen years later. But you can't always reach out and seize your second act; sometimes you have to be summoned. Which is why Newt's new game is a waiting game—waiting for a second chance, and a call that may not come. ▀

Ross Douthat is an associate editor of *The Atlantic*.

STATES OF INSECURITY

The Atlantic recently asked a group of foreign-policy authorities—selected for their breadth of knowledge and firsthand experience in international affairs—about threats facing the United States



Q: Which states will pose the greatest overall threats to U.S. security over the next decade, either directly or indirectly? (38 votes)

	Points	First-Place Votes
1. Iran	116.0	18.5
2. North Korea	74.0	6
3. Pakistan	59.5	5
4. China	57.0	4
5. Saudi Arabia	30.5	0
6. Iraq	27.0	5
7. Russia	21.0	0.5

Write-ins: Egypt, Venezuela (1 point each)

ON IRAN

"The first new hostile nuclear power in almost half a century."

"A nuclear-armed Iran under radical leadership would destabilize the entire Middle East, threaten Israel's survival, and enable Iran to sponsor terrorism against the U.S. and our allies while meddling in Iraq and Afghanistan with impunity."

"If Iran's leadership (as it appears) is recovering its revolutionary impulse, we face a future of destabilizing activities in the region."

"Unless both the U.S. and Iran shift course, this could become a major threat to U.S. security; [much depends] on the wisdom—or lack of wisdom—of leaders."

ON NORTH KOREA

"North Korea represents the biggest immediate nuclear-proliferation threat. Nothing should give us comfort that North Korea will not sell nukes to al-Qaeda or other U.S. adversaries—or even [that it won't] start a conflict threatening U.S. forces and interests on the Korean Peninsula. The failure of

the Bush administration, distracted by a non-nuclear Iraq, to deal effectively with the nuclear threats from Iran and North Korea constitutes the single most serious failure of U.S. national-security policy in a generation."

"The big problem here is what happens when the regime starts to implode. That could be very messy."

"North Korea will not last the decade. It will collapse, hopefully peacefully, and be absorbed by South Korea. We will then have a pro-Western but potentially nuclear-unified Korea, which will be a challenge but also a potential ally. It will not be a threat to our interests."

ON PAKISTAN

"Pakistan could become No. 1 on this list in a heartbeat, if Musharraf is toppled in a coup by radicals with the willingness to use or transfer nuclear weapons."

"In the next ten years, the most likely threats to U.S. security will come from states disintegrating rather than from rogue states armed with weapons of mass destruction ... Pakistan tops the list: it is a weak state, with uncertain control over nuclear weapons, and home to various terrorist groups that remain largely beyond the control of the state security forces."

"The problem in the 'war on terror' is our 'friends' as much as our enemies ... The worst-kept secret in the world is that we are not allowed to debrief A. Q. Khan [the father of Pakistan's nuclear program, now under house arrest for selling nuclear technology to other states], because he'd tell us what we already know and fear to

confirm: [Pakistan's] generals were in on the proliferation scam with him."

ON CHINA

"China will threaten U.S. security indirectly, as a consequence of its insatiable thirst for oil and its willingness to do anything to compete for access to secure energy supplies; its growing economic, technological, and military power; and the fact that it holds large quantities of U.S. debt."

"China may or may not be a major threat over time. It is not now."

ON SAUDI ARABIA

"More democracy would just bring worse Wahhabists to power. On the other hand, the members of the corrupt ruling family are hardly poster children for [responsibility]; supporting them is to court long-term disaster. Either way, this is a major problem."

ON IRAQ

"Iraq represents a massive diversion of our energies, the prospect of a radically destabilized region, and a massive erosion in the perception of our power and moral authority."

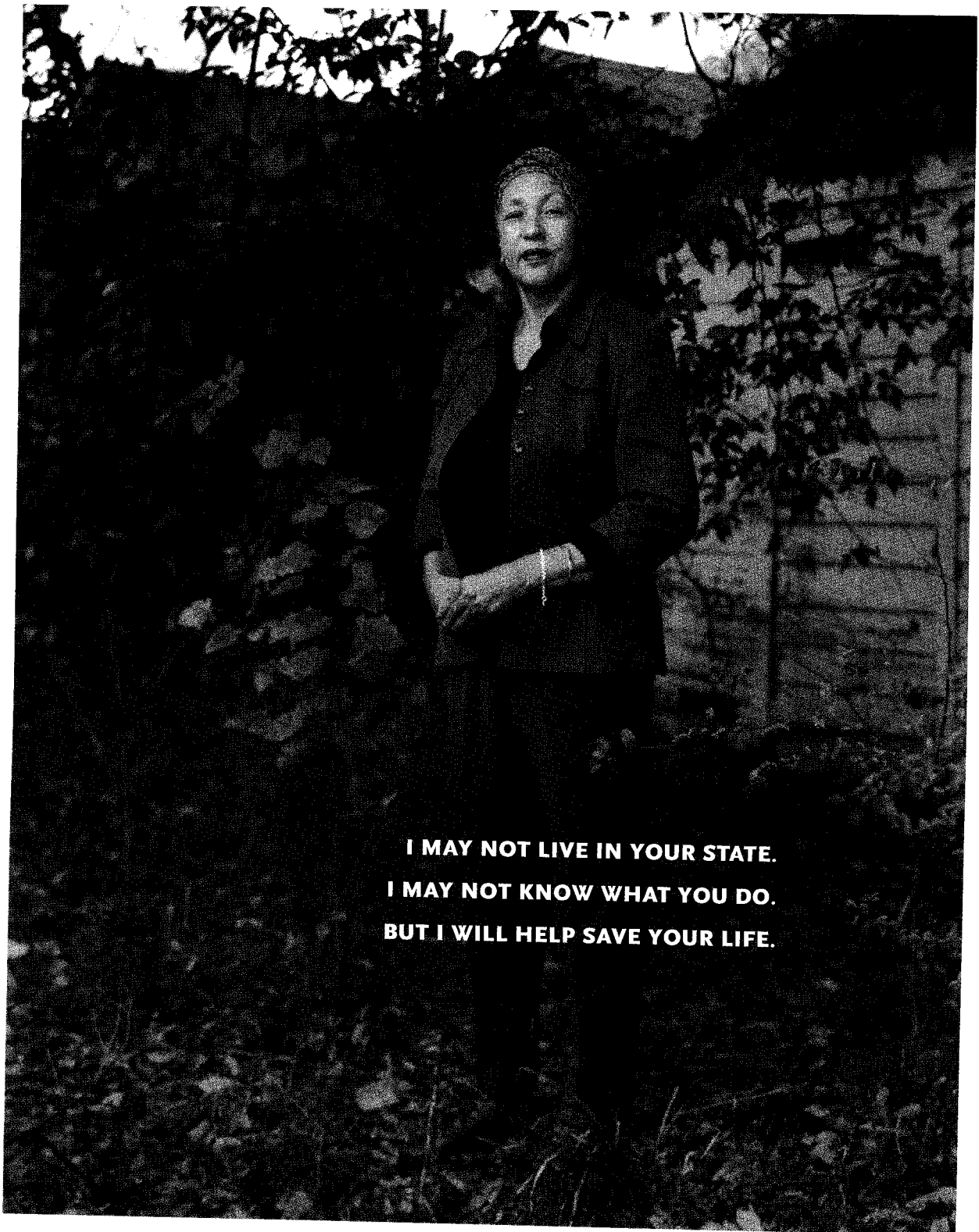
"If that doesn't go right ... after all the American blood and resources, then we're in for real trouble by a bolstered radical Islamic ideology."

ON RUSSIA

"Russia will continue its slide into authoritarianism and dictatorship and will increasingly challenge Western interests, albeit largely on [the West's] periphery."

METHODOLOGY: Poll participants were given a list of seven countries and asked to rank the four that pose the greatest overall threats to U.S. security over the next ten years. In tallying the scores, a first-place vote was worth 4 points, a second-place vote was worth 3, a third-place vote was worth 2, and a fourth-place vote was worth 1. Where respondents split their votes between two countries, the points were adjusted accordingly. Not all participants selected four countries.

POLL PARTICIPANTS: Kenneth Adelman, Madeleine Albright, Graham Allison, Ronald Asmus, Samuel R. Berger, Daniel Blumenthal, Max Boot, Stephen Bosworth, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Ivo Daalder, James Dobbins, Lawrence Eagleburger, Leslie Gelb, Marc Grossman, Douglas Feith, John Gaddis, Jay Garner, John Hamre, Gary Hart, Bruce Hoffman, John Hulsman, Robert Hunter, Robert Kagan, David Kay, John Lehman, James Lindsay, Jessica Mathews, William Nash, Joseph Nye, Carlos Pascual, Thomas Pickering, Kenneth Pollack, Joseph Ralston, Wendy Sherman, Anne-Marie Slaughter, James Steinberg, Susan Rice, and Anthony Zinni.



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Primary Sources

Another problem for Pakistan; the teachers nobody wants; why you can't trust what you read; unhappier by the dozen?

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Unquiet on the Western Front

As if Pakistan doesn't have enough problems in the hinterland—the ongoing duel with India over Kashmir, the lawless border with Afghanistan—trouble is brewing in its westernmost province, Baluchistan, according to a new study from the Carnegie Endowment. Baluch nation-

alists, who claim a distinct ethnic identity going back 2,000 years, have clashed with the central government several times over the past fifty years, most recently in the mid-1970s, when a rebellion left nearly 8,000 dead. The province is strategically located (it borders both Iran and Afghanistan) and rich in resources (it provides more than 40 percent of Pakistan's

energy), and its stability is crucial to Islamabad. But it is building over a number of issues. The Baluchs feel inadequately compensated for the country's use of their province's resources and believe they are not benefiting sufficiently from economic development. In addition, they oppose the government-promoted spread of political Islam (though they are largely Muslim themselves). Another insurrection appears to be in the offing: attacks on Pakistani troops and sabotage of oil pipelines are escalating. Although the Carnegie report expresses doubt that

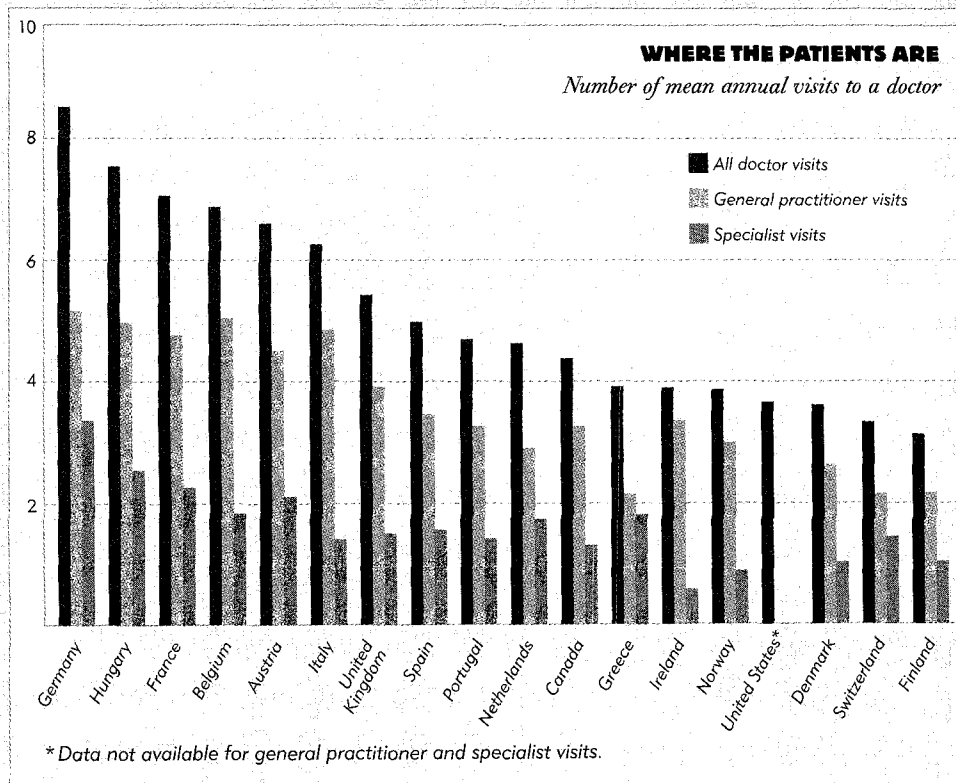
the Baluchs could win a war for independence, it warns that "the risk of a prolonged guerrilla movement ... is quite real."

—"Pakistan: The Resurgence of Baluch Nationalism," Frédéric Grare, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

The Price of Liberty

The end of apartheid, in 1994, not only made black South Africans significantly freer; it also made them significantly poorer, according to a study by the National Bureau of Economic Research. Average incomes for all races dropped by 40 percent between 1995 and 2000, the last year studied in depth (there's no evidence that they've rebounded since). Blacks and the young saw the greatest declines, and the black-white income gap, which had been gradually shrinking since the 1970s, grew markedly after 1994. This is perhaps not surprising: political liberalization, the authors note, opened South Africa's economy to global competition. And in developed economies the income gap between those with disparate levels of education—a gap that favors South Africa's whites—tends to widen.

—"Incomes in South Africa Since the Fall of Apartheid," M. Leibbrandt, J. Levinsohn, and J. McCrary, NBER



MEDICINE

What's German for "Hypochondria"?

A study of health care in twenty-one OECD nations reveals that in most countries, between 70 and 90 percent of the population visits a doctor at least once a year; the exceptions are the United

States (68 percent), Greece (63 percent), and Mexico (21 percent). However, the average number of visits a person makes each year varies widely. For example, the typical German or Hungarian sees a doctor more than seven times annually, while the typical Dane, Norwegian, or Ameri-

can does so only four times. The researchers found little to explain the variation, attributing it, at least in part, to "cultural differences in seeking medical advice or care."

—"Inequalities in Access to Medical Care by Income in Developed Countries," E. van Doorslaer, C. Masseria, and X. Koolman, Canadian Medical Association Journal

EDUCATION

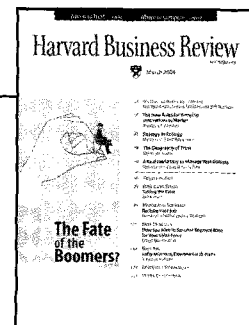
Those Who Can't Teach

There's plenty of debate about "school choice," but perhaps parents and other interested parties should worry more about "teacher choice"—that is, principals' ability to hire the best teachers they can find. A recent study from the New Teacher Project, which collected data on staffing at five major



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urban school districts around the country, discovered that 40 percent of teacher vacancies were filled by "voluntary transfers" (incumbent teachers exercising contract-mandated transfer options) and "excessed" teachers (teachers whose jobs were cut and who generally must, according to union rules, be hired before other candidates). According to the study, many of the teachers hired in these instances are "poor performers" and are "passed around from school to school instead of being terminated." Principals, of course, are unhappy about this state of affairs. In one district, 64 percent of principals at schools that added such teachers in the last year said that they wished they had not hired them, and 26 percent rated "all or almost all" of the excessed teachers who came on board as "unsatisfactory." Some principals even admitted to hiding vacancies in order to avoid unwanted hires; for example, a principal might wait to post a job opening until after all the transfers and excessed teachers in the district have been assigned.

—"Unintended Consequences: The Case for Reforming the Staffing Rules in Urban Teachers' Union Contracts," J. Levin, J. Mulhern, and J. Schunck, *New Teacher Project*

INFORMATION

Error for Error

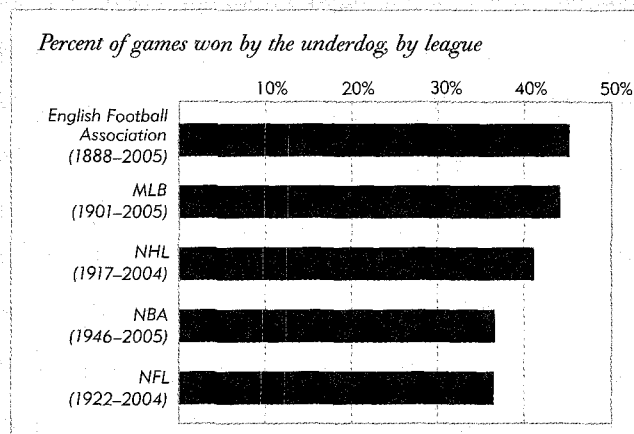
The online encyclopedia Wikipedia, whose entries can be written and edited by anyone with an Internet connection, has taken a lot of heat for its inaccuracies, most recently when an article claimed that a former aide to Robert F. Kennedy might have been involved in the assassinations of the Kennedy brothers. But it's

SPORTS

Super Bore?

If you like your spectator sports unpredictable, it's best to head for the soccer stadium—or so researchers at the Los Alamos National Laboratory would recommend. They examined nearly every game in the history of the English Football Association, Major League Baseball, the National Hockey League, the National Basketball Association, and the National Football League—more than 300,000 games in all. Soccer proved to be the sport in which the underdog (the team with the worse record) did the best, winning a little more than 45 percent of all contests. The most predictable sport seems to be American football: the underdog has won roughly 36 percent of all NFL games.

—"What Is the Most Competitive Sport?" E. Ben-Naim, F. Vasquez, and S. Redner, Los Alamos National Laboratory



not much worse than the online version of the legendary *Encyclopedia Britannica*, according to a study conducted by *Nature*. The magazine's researchers matched up entries from the two encyclopedias and obtained expert evaluations of forty-two pairs. The experts found a total of eight "serious" errors (defined as mistaken interpretations of important concepts)—four in Wikipedia and four in the *Britannica*. Combined, the *Britannica*'s entries contained 123 "factual errors, omissions, or misleading statements," and Wikipedia's had 162; in other words, the professionally produced encyclopedia had three errors for every four in the amateur one. However, a number of evaluators noted that their assigned *Britannica*

entry was better written than the Wikipedia one, which they found badly structured and difficult to follow.

—"Internet Encyclopaedias Go Head to Head," J. Giles et al., *Nature*

SOCIETY

Last Rights

Americans overwhelmingly support some form of a "right to die," according to a new survey from the Pew Research Center. By more than eight to one, those surveyed favored laws that would let terminally ill patients decide whether to accept medical treatment. Smaller majorities agreed that people have a right to end their lives if they "have an incurable disease" or "suffer great pain with no hope of improvement," and that it is "sometimes justified" to

help your spouse commit suicide or to end his or her life yourself. The public was less certain about extending this latitude to doctors, splitting nearly evenly on the question of whether to allow physician-assisted suicide. And only a third supported a right to die for people who merely feel that "living is a burden."

—"Strong Public Support for Right to Die," Pew Research Center for the People and the Press

Quantity vs. Quality

Does a large number of siblings vying for parental resources and attention hurt a child's chances for success later in life? Researchers recently investigated this question by looking at a variety of families in Israel. They found that the presence of a third child (or more than three children) had little effect on the long-term educational attainment, adult earnings, and marriage and fertility rates of first- and second-born children; the only noticeable difference was that first-born daughters tended to marry sooner if they came from large families—perhaps, the authors speculate, out of a desire to escape the crowd. They also speculate that parents may adjust to additional children by cutting down on luxuries and leisure activities rather than on time with their children—or, alternately, that large families may be more likely to have stay-at-home moms, who make up for some of the otherwise scarcer parental attention.

—"New Evidence on the Causal Link Between the Quantity and Quality of Children," J. Angrist, V. Lavy, and A. Schlosser, NBER

For links to the documents discussed in these pages, visit www.theatlantic.com/doc/200604/primarysources.

Who's making a fortune?
Who's frittering one away?
Who's on the front page?
Who's on the front lines?
Who designed those jeans?
Who designed those genes?
Who's reaching out?
Who's selling out?
Who lives in that big house?
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150 YEARS OF THE ATLANTIC

Markets & Morals

This is the third in a series of archival excerpts in honor of the magazine's 150th anniversary. This installment is introduced by Joseph Stiglitz, a professor of economics at Columbia University and a winner of the Nobel Prize in economics.



IN THE YEARS SINCE *The Atlantic's* founding, the national and global economies have changed dramatically. A predominantly agrarian society has given way to an industrial society, which in turn has given way to a globally networked information society. Through all these dramatic transformations, written commentary in magazines like *The Atlantic* has provided context, insight, and occasional pointed criticism, to help ordinary people make sense of the shifting economic climates affecting them.

In some instances—as in the case of Henry Demarest Lloyd's compelling written attack on the infamous Standard Oil monopoly—the urgent eloquence of a critical essay has mobilized citizens to amend the rules governing the prevailing economic system. In other cases, economic thinkers have availed themselves of the essay form to buoy readers during times of financial crisis, or to provoke them to demand more from capitalism than mere fulfillment of their material needs. Still others have sought to alert readers to major social and economic changes being wrought by new technological advances, or to celebrate the heady (and

lucrative) possibilities available to the savvy entrepreneur in a free market.

Taken together, the five articles excerpted here exemplify the ways in which large-minded thinkers can illuminate the complexities of the sometimes mysterious-seeming economic world—dispelling harmful myths, opening readers' eyes to insidious abuses or unrecognized potentials, and equipping ordinary citizens with tools not merely for weathering the prevailing economic system but for engaging with it in a positive and strategic manner.

As recently as four years ago, America again went into recession, and globalization has caused increasing anxiety among workers about competition from cheap labor abroad. The system has delivered enormous benefits for those at the top, but incomes at the bottom have stagnated, or even declined. Given such realities, it is more important than ever for people to be armed with economic knowledge.

Though economic science has advanced and the language we use to discuss it has changed, the issues raised in the following pages are as salient today as they were when the articles were written. They articulate the struggle to create an economy that not only functions well and efficiently but is in service to the highest human ideals.

—JOSEPH STIGLITZ

For the full text of these articles, visit www.theatlantic.com/ideastour.

MONOPOLY ON THE MARCH

March 1881

BY HENRY DEMAREST LLOYD

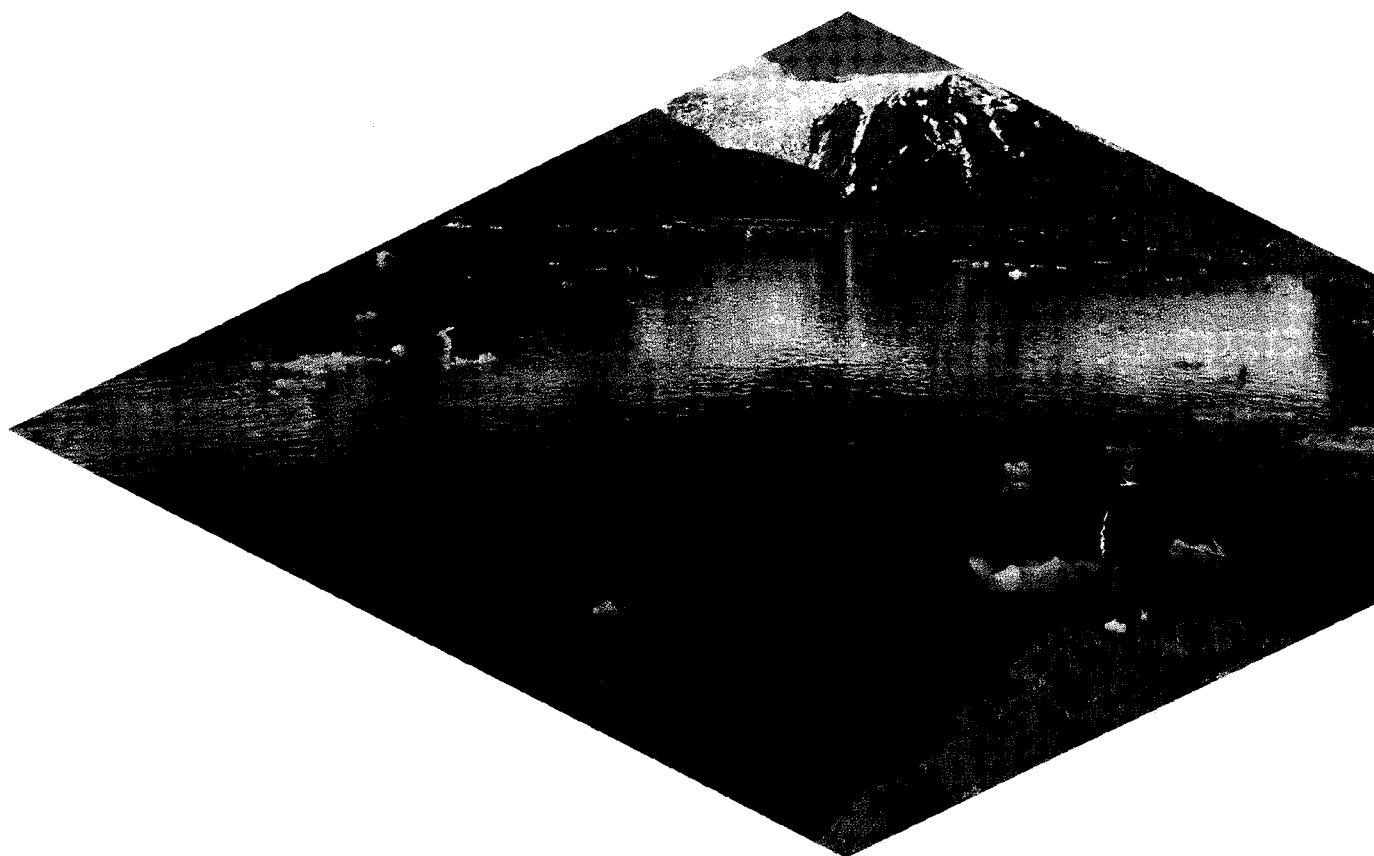
.....

This was one of the earliest pieces of progressive muckraking to be published in a national, well-respected magazine—and the first exposé of the Standard Oil Trust to be taken seriously. The issue in which the article appeared sold out seven printings, and it helped bring antitrust legislation to the forefront of national debate, auguring the passage of the Interstate Commerce Act of 1887 and the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890.

Kerosene has become, by its cheapness, the people's light the world over ... Very few of the forty millions of people in the United States who burn kerosene know that its production, manufacture, and export, its price at home and abroad, have been controlled for

years by a single corporation—the Standard Oil Company. This company began in a partnership, in the early years of the civil war, between Samuel Andrews and John Rockefeller in Cleveland. Rockefeller had been a bookkeeper in some interior town in Ohio, and had afterwards made a few thousand dollars by keeping a flour store in Cleveland. Andrews had been a day laborer in refineries, and so poor that his wife took in sewing. He found a way of refining by which more kerosene could be got out of a barrel of petroleum than by any other method, and set up for himself a ten-barrel still in Cleveland, by which he cleared \$500 in six months. Andrews' still and Rockefeller's savings have grown into the Standard Oil Company. It has a capital, nominally \$3,500,000, but really much more, on which it divides among its stockholders every year millions of dollars of profits ...

The Standard produces only one fiftieth or sixtieth of our petroleum, but dictates the price of all, and refines nine



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tenths. Circulars are issued at intervals by which the price of oil is fixed for all the cities of the country, except New York, where a little competition survives ... This corporation has driven into bankruptcy, or out of business, or into union with itself, all the petroleum refineries of the country except five in New York, and a few of little consequence in Western Pennsylvania ...

The time has come to face the fact that the forces of capital and industry have outgrown the forces of our government. The corporation and the trades-union have forgotten that they are the creatures of the state. Our strong men are engaged in a headlong fight for fortune, power, precedence, success. Americans as they are, they ride over the people like Juggernaut to gain their ends. The moralists have preached to them since the world began, and have failed. The common people, the nation, must take them in hand. The people can be successful only when they are right. When monopolies succeed, the people fail; when a rich criminal escapes justice, the people are punished; when a legislature is bribed, the people are cheated ... The nation is the engine of the people. They must use it for their industrial life, as they used it in 1861 for their political life. The States have failed. The United States must succeed, or the people will perish.

Volume 47, No. 281, pp. 317-334

THE RESILIENCE OF CAPITALISM

May 1932

BY JOHN MAYNARD KEYNES

.....

In the midst of the Great Depression, British economist John Maynard Keynes considered the prospects for capitalism's survival.

Can we prevent an almost complete collapse of the financial structure of modern capitalism? With no financial leadership left in the world and profound intellectual error as to causes and cures prevailing in the responsible seats of power, one begins to wonder and to doubt ...

We are now in the phase where the risk of carrying assets with borrowed money is so great that there is a competitive panic to get liquid. And each individual who succeeds in getting more liquid forces down the price of assets in the process of getting liquid, with the result that the margins of other individuals are impaired and their courage undermined ...

The competitive struggle for liquidity has now extended beyond individuals and institutions to nations and to governments, each of which endeavors to make its internal balance sheet more liquid by restricting imports and stimulating exports by every possible means, the success of each one in this direction meaning the defeat of someone else ...

We have here an extreme example of the *disharmony* of general and particular interest. Each nation, in an effort to improve its relative position, takes measures injurious to the absolute prosperity of its neighbors; and, since its example is not confined to itself, it suffers more from similar action by its neighbors than it gains by such action itself ... An individual may be forced by his private circumstances to curtail his normal expenditure, and no one can blame him. But let no one suppose that he is performing a public duty in behaving in such a way. The modern capitalist is a fair-weather sailor. As soon as a storm rises, he abandons the duties of navigation and even sinks the boats which might carry him to safety by his haste to push his neighbor off and himself in ...

Well, I have painted the prospect in the blackest colors. What is there to be said on the other side? What elements of hope can we discern in the surrounding gloom? And what useful action does it still lie in our power to take?

The outstanding ground for cheerfulness lies, I think, in this—that the system has shown already its capacity to stand an almost inconceivable strain. If anyone had prophesied to us a year or two ago the actual state of affairs which exists to-day, could we have believed that the world could continue to maintain even that degree of normality which we actually have? This remarkable capacity of the system to take punishment is the best reason for hoping that we still have time to rally the constructive forces of the world.

Volume 149, No. 5, pp. 521-526

LIBERTY, HAPPINESS ... AND THE ECONOMY

June 1967

BY JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH

.....

At a time when Cold War tensions had rendered Americans suspicious of anything that smacked even vaguely of socialism, Harvard economist John Kenneth Galbraith made a case for the value of a certain degree of centralized market oversight: "It is through the state that the society must assert the superior claims of aesthetic over economic goals and particularly of environment over cost."

In the latter part of the last century and the early decades of this, no subject was more discussed than the future of capitalism. Economists, men of unspecific wisdom, political philosophers, knowledgeable ecclesiastics, and George Bernard Shaw all contributed their personal revelation. All agreed that the economic system was in a state of development and in time would transform itself into something hopefully better but certainly different ...

The next step will be a general recognition of the convergent tendencies of modern industrial systems, even

though differently billed as socialism or capitalism. And we must also assume that this is a good thing. In time it will dispose of the notion of inevitable conflict based on irreconcilable difference ...

The two questions most asked about an economic system are whether it serves man's physical needs and whether it is consistent with his liberty and general happiness. There is little doubt as to the ability of the modern industrial system to supply man with goods ...

The prospect for liberty is far more interesting. It has always been imagined, especially by conservatives, that to associate all, or a large part, of economic activity with the state is to endanger freedom ...

But the problem is not the freedom of the businessman. It can be laid down as a general rule that those who speak most of liberty least use what they have. The businessman who praises it most is a disciplined organization man. The retired general who now lectures on the threat of Communist regimentation was invariably a martinet who relished an existence in accordance with military regulations. The Secretary of State who speaks most feelingly of the free world most admires the fine conformity of his own thought.

The greater danger is in the subordination of belief to the needs of the modern industrial system. As this persuades us on the goods we buy, and as it persuades us on the public policies that are necessary for its planning, so it also accommodates us to its goals and values. These are that technology is always good; that economic growth is always good; that firms must always expand; that consumption of goods is the principal source of happiness; that idleness is wicked; and that nothing should interfere with the priority we accord to technology, growth, and increased consumption.

If we continue to believe that the goals of the modern industrial system and the public policies that serve these goals are coordinate with all of life, then all of our lives will be in the service of these goals. What is consistent with these ends we shall have or be allowed; all else will be off limits. Our wants will be managed in accordance with the needs of the industrial system; the state in civilian and military policy will be heavily influenced by industrial need; education will be adapted to similar need; the discipline required by the industrial system will be the conventional morality of the community. All other goals will be made to seem precious, unimportant, or antisocial. We will be the mentally indentured servants of the industrial system. This will be the benign servitude of the household retainer who is taught to love her master and mistress and believe that their interests are her own. But it is not exactly freedom.

If, on the other hand, the industrial system is seen to be only a part, and as we grow wealthier, a diminishing part, of life, there is much less occasion for concern. Aesthetic

goals will have pride of place; those who serve them will not be subject to the goals of the industrial system; the industrial system itself will be subordinate to the claims of larger dimensions of life. Intellectual preparation will be for its own sake and not merely for the better service to the industrial system. Men will not be entrapped by the belief that apart from the production of goods and income by progressively more advanced technical methods there is nothing much in life ...

The need is to subordinate economic to aesthetic goals—to sacrifice efficiency, including the efficiency of organization, to beauty. Nor must there be any nonsense about beauty paying in the long run. It need not pay ...

It is through the state that the society must assert the superior claims of aesthetic over economic goals and particularly of environment over cost. It is to the state that we must look for freedom of individual choice as to toil; for a balance between liberal education and the technical training that primarily serves the industrial system; and it is for the state to reject images of international politics that underwrite technology but at the price of unacceptable danger. If the state is to serve these ends, the scientific and educational estate and the larger intellectual community must be aware of their power and their opportunity and they must use them. There is no one else.

Volume 219, No. 6, pp. 61-67

THE AGE OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

November 1994

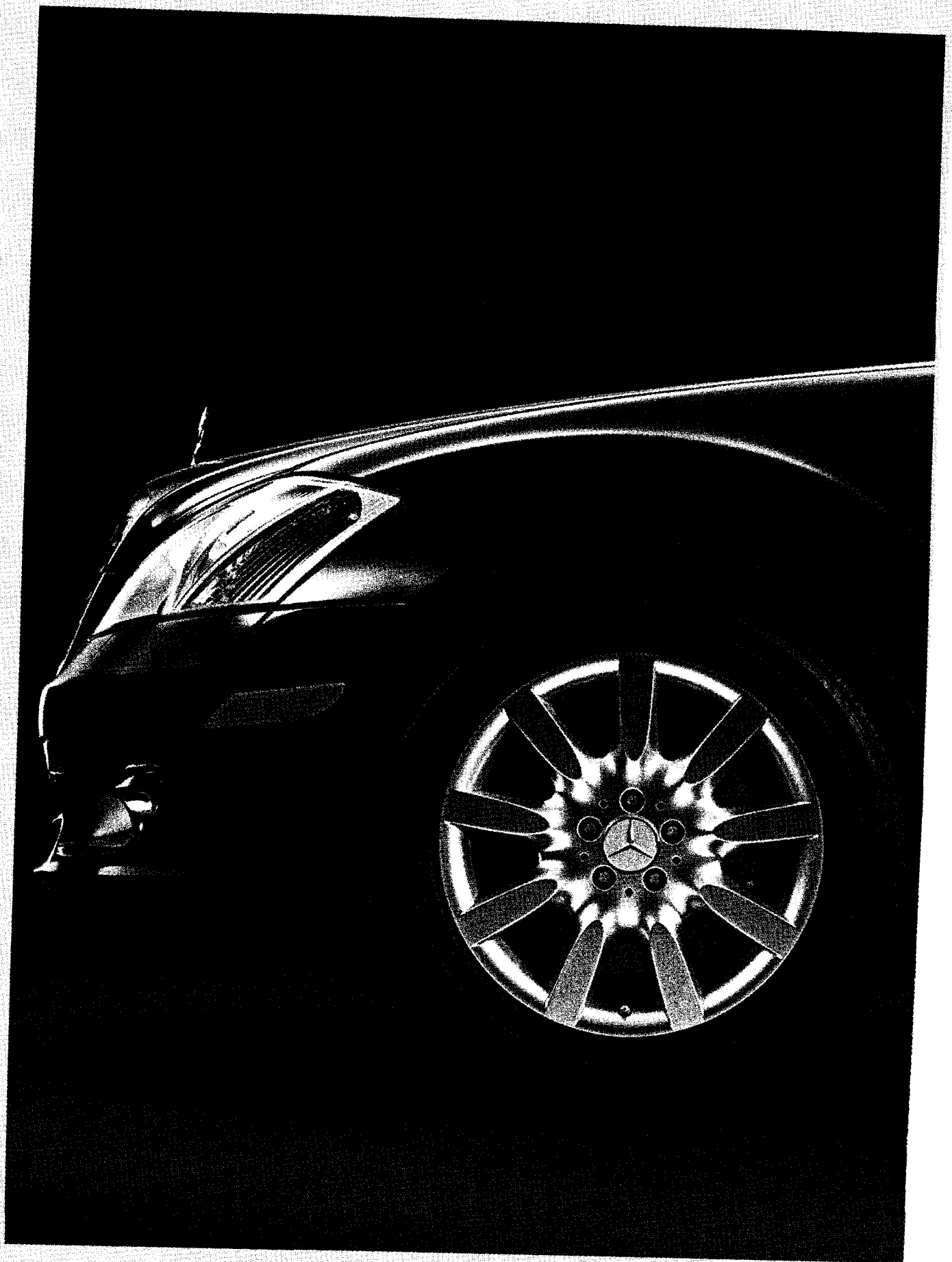
BY PETER F. DRUCKER

.....

As the twentieth century drew to a close, management expert Peter F. Drucker hailed the advent of the knowledge worker.

This century of ours may well have been the cruelest and most violent in history, with its world and civil wars, its mass tortures, ethnic cleansings, genocides, and holocausts. But all these killings, all these horrors inflicted on the human race by this century's murderous "charismatics," hindsight clearly shows, were just that: senseless killings, senseless horrors, "sound and fury, signifying nothing" ...

It is the social transformations, like ocean currents deep below the hurricane-tormented surface of the sea, that have had the lasting, indeed the permanent, effect. They, rather than all the violence of the political surface, have transformed not only the society but also the economy, the community, and the polity we live in. The age of social transformation will not come to an end with the year 2000—it will not even have peaked by then ...



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The newly emerging dominant group is "knowledge workers." The very term was unknown forty years ago. (I coined it in a 1959 book, *Landmarks of Tomorrow*.) By the end of this century knowledge workers will make up a third or more of the work force in the United States—as large a proportion as manufacturing workers ever made up, except in wartime. The majority of them will be paid at least as well as, or better than, manufacturing workers ever were. And the new jobs offer much greater opportunities.

But—and this is a big but—the great majority of the new jobs require qualifications the industrial worker does not possess and is poorly equipped to acquire. They require a good deal of formal education and the ability to acquire and to apply theoretical and analytical knowledge. They require a different approach to work and a different mindset. Above all, they require a habit of continuous learning. Displaced industrial workers thus cannot simply move into knowledge work or services the way displaced farmers and domestic workers moved into industrial work. At the very least they have to change their basic attitudes, values, and beliefs ...

The shift to knowledge-based work poses enormous social challenges. Despite the factory, industrial society was still essentially a traditional society in its basic social relationships of production. But the emerging society, the one based on knowledge and knowledge workers, is not. It is the first society in which ordinary people—and that means most people—do not earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brow. It is the first society in which "honest work" does not mean a callused hand. It is also the first society in which not everybody does the same work, as was the case when the huge majority were farmers or, as seemed likely only forty or thirty years ago, were going to be machine operators.

This is far more than a social change. It is a change in the human condition.

Volume 274, No. 5, pp. 53–80

BUILDING WEALTH

June 1999

BY LESTER C. THUROW

.....

In 1999, MIT economist Lester C. Thurow explained how great fortunes are made.

The rich see opportunities to work and invest in situations where great disequilibria—imbalances or openings in the economy created by new circumstances—exist. Something, usually a new technology, has opened up opportunities to jump to new products with very different capabilities or to new processes with much

higher levels of productivity. This was as true for John D. Rockefeller as it is for Bill Gates. For both of them lifetime savings constituted a small fraction of total wealth. Carefully saving money and investing in normal equilibrium situations can make one comfortable in old age but never really wealthy ...

Real wealth is the ability to produce more with less—to generate a flow of goods and services without having to sacrifice something else of equal value. It is not created by taking time away from other activities and devoting it to money-making ...

Entrepreneurs see sociological opportunities to change human habits. Starbucks persuaded Americans to replace their fifty-cent cup of coffee bought at a local restaurant with a \$2.50 cup of coffee bought at a coffee bar ...

Entrepreneurship ... is a fundamental human characteristic but, despite its creative and destructive powers, an extremely fragile one. Among most peoples in most times and most places entrepreneurs do not exist. The economic possibilities exist, but they are not seen, the energy to realize them is lacking, or the risks they involve seem too great ...

When societies aren't organized so that the old vested interests can be brushed aside, entrepreneurs cannot emerge. Social systems have to be built in which entrepreneurs have the freedom to destroy the old. Yet destroying the old can too easily be seen as a step into chaos. Societies that aren't ready to break with the past aren't willing to let entrepreneurs come into existence ...

Great persistence is needed to bring a truly new idea into the market. Steam toys have been unearthed in the archaeological exploration of ancient Greece, and the ancient Egyptians had steam-powered temple doors—yet the steam engine did not emerge as a source of power for economic production until the eighteenth century. The right sociology had to be in place for revolutionary new products to emerge ...

Successful societies create and manage a tension between order and chaos without letting either of them get out of hand. New ideas are easily frustrated if societies are not receptive to the chaos that comes from change, yet societies have to maintain an appropriate degree of order to take advantage of creative breakthroughs.

At the individual level these same forces show up as a tension between tradition and rebellion. Einstein dropped out of high school at the age of fifteen; renounced his citizenship a year later; lived on the margins socially, economically, and morally; and called himself a gypsy and was viewed as a bohemian. His life was in some sense a search for order in disorder, both scientifically and socially. Great creativity requires hard facts, wild imagination, and nonlogical jumps forward that are then proved to be right by working backward to known principles. Only the rebellious can do it.

Volume 283, No. 6, pp. 57–69

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DOUBLE BLIND

The untold story of how British intelligence infiltrated and undermined the IRA

BY MATTHEW TEAGUE

Photographs by Ed Kashi

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I first met the man now called Kevin Fulton in London, on Platform 13 at Victoria Station. We almost missed each other in the crowd; he didn't look at all like a terrorist.

He stood with his feet together, a short and round man with a kind face, fair hair, and blue eyes. He might have been an Irish grammar-school teacher, not an IRA bomber or a British spy in hiding. Both of which he was.

Fulton had agreed to meet only after an exchange of messages through an intermediary. Now, as we talked on the platform, he paced back and forth, scanning the faces of passersby. He checked the time, then checked it again. He spoke in an almost impenetrable brogue, and each time I leaned in to understand him, he leaned back, suspicious. He fidgeted with several mobile phones, one devoted to each of his lives. "I'm just cautious," he said.

He lives in London now, but his wife remains in Northern Ireland. He rarely goes out, for fear of bumping into the wrong person, and so leads a life of utter isolation, a forty-five-year-old man with a lot on his mind.

During the next few months, Fulton and I met several times on Platform 13. Over time his jitters settled, his speech loosened, and his past tumbled out: his rise and fall in the Irish Republican Army, his deeds and misdeeds, his loyalties and betrayals. He had served as a covert foot soldier in what has come to be called the Dirty War: a cutthroat and secret British effort to infiltrate and undermine the IRA, carried out in the shadows of the infamous Troubles. "It was a lot grayer and darker," Fulton said of the clandestine war. "Darker even than people can imagine."

But there's this: it worked. British spies subverted the IRA from within, leaving it in military ruin, and Irish Republicans—who want to end British rule in Northern Ireland and reunite the island—have largely shifted their weight to Sinn Féin and its peaceable, political efforts. And so the Dirty War provides a model for how to dismantle a terrorist organization. The trick is to not mind killing, and to expect dying.

This came clear to Kevin Fulton on the day his cover as an IRA man collapsed. It happened

inside an IRA safe house in north Belfast, in 1994. Fulton sat facing a wall, blindfolded. Curtains shut out the pale light of winter. Bottles lay scattered on the floor, and the place stank of stale beer. An interrogator paced the room, his boots scuffing against the floor. He said, "I know what yer done, boyo."

He pressed a thick index finger against Fulton's temple, hard, then leaned in close to Fulton's ear and murmured a series of threats: *The IRA hunts down all snitches and executes them. Two quick bullets in the brain. Remember the boy from County Armagh who left behind the pregnant wife. Remember the boy from County Louth who left seven children mewling for a father. Remember them all.*

British authorities had recently picked up Fulton for questioning. Now the IRA, which had begun to suspect him of being a British agent, wanted to know why.

Again, the finger to the temple.

"What did you tell them?"

Fulton knew the voice, and its owner: Scap, one of the IRA's most feared interrogators. Fulton had once helped prepare safe houses for such interrogations, and knew that sometimes Scap's subjects survived. Sometimes not.

Colleagues called both men "hard bastards": true IRA boys, mothered by terrorism. They killed for the cause, time and again. But British spies had infiltrated the IRA, spreading deceit and rumors of deceit. The IRA had turned against itself. Scap couldn't say for sure who fought on his side.

The interrogation dragged on for hours. Fulton remained outwardly calm, and denied everything. Inwardly, though, he felt sick. He'd been spying on the IRA for a decade and a half, and he knew that if Scap broke him—if he admitted anything—he'd be a dead man. "Down a hole," in IRA slang.

So throughout the interrogation, Fulton sat stone-faced, blindfolded, and facing the wall. Double blind. He held tight to his secret: yes, he was a British spy.

But then, so was his interrogator.

Matthew Teague is a freelance writer whose articles have appeared in Esquire, GQ, and Philadelphia.

As a boy, Freddie Scappaticci ducked and scuffled on the streets of Belfast, fighting Protestants to fit in with his Catholic friends.

His parents had immigrated to Northern Ireland in the 1920s with a wave of other Italian families and settled in the Markets area of south Belfast, where Freddie was born in 1944. The old neighborhood hummed; under historic Georgian terraces, families bustled from churches to butcher shops to apple stalls. The Scappaticcis sold ice cream and earned a reputation as “terrible nice people.”

Belfast appealed more to the terrible than to the nice during Freddie Scappaticci’s childhood. After thirty years of Protestant-Catholic strife, Catholic hatred for Protestants had grown so powerful that it enfolded all Irish Catholics, even those with Italian parents. As tension escalated in the 1960s and the Troubles began, Scappaticci joined in schoolyard brawls and street fights, and at sixteen he received the ultimate mark of credibility: Protestant police on patrol beat him severely, leaving him bruised and proud.

In 1969 the British army blundered into Northern Ireland at the request of its overwhelmed government, to stamp out Catholic and Protestant animosity once and for all. Soldiers in armored Land Rovers patrolled city streets across the country; they wore uniforms and helmets, and brandished automatic rifles. They planned to bring peace to a troubled land. For a while the local population showed the troops with gratitude for helping separate the two

forming leadership and rank. Scappaticci found himself interned alongside future notable Republicans like Gerry Adams and David Morley. The old IRA leadership in Dublin—relatively tame Marxists who spent more time writing than fighting—faded away, replaced by a more ferocious guard that called itself the Provisional IRA. The older generation had huffed and puffed against Protestant discrimination, but these younger men took up arms against a larger enemy: the British army.

When Scappaticci was released, three years later, he had become a hard-shelled IRA man. He switched from bricks to bullets. His colleagues marveled at his marksmanship, and rumor has it that he killed several soldiers. At the time, the atmosphere in Belfast was like Irish poteen liquor: boiled and fermented, distilled into something potent and unlawful. Protestants flew the Union Jack and painted their curbstones red, white, and blue; Catholics flew the Irish flag and painted their curbs orange, white, and green. Men in one part of the city wore bowler hats and carried silver-knobbed canes; men just a block away wore green and carried shillelaghs. Belfast felt more British than London, and more Irish than Dublin.

The IRA swelled in power, money, and numbers. Its members executed increasingly ruthless operations against Protestant groups and British forces, but Scappaticci gradually began to notice a disturbing pattern: hot-blooded young men were sent headlong into dangerous missions, but

their leaders stayed safe in the pubs back home. And when these foot soldiers died or landed in prison, the leaders sometimes showed up around town with the missing men’s wives.

The leaders grew rich

The Dirty War provides a model for how to dismantle a terrorist organization. The trick is to not mind killing, and to expect dying.

black-eyed factions, but soon, in pubs and cathedrals across Northern Ireland, people began whispering “occupation.” The whispers grew to shouts, and shouts became hurled stones. Before long Scappaticci—who had started to go by the less-Italian name Scap—took to throwing bricks at British squads. “Freddie was full Belfast,” his childhood acquaintance Victor Notarantonio remembers.

Across the city, bands of jobless young men roamed the streets looking for a cause, or an excuse. And in 1971 they found one. After several murders by the IRA, the British instituted a policy of internment without trial, sweeping hundreds of suspects off the streets and taking them to an unused air base, called Long Kesh, several miles south of Belfast. It proved a spectacular bungle. The British had relied on outdated intelligence reports and arrested many people, including Scappaticci, with only a passing connection to the IRA, while the IRA’s top people received tip-offs and went into hiding.

The roundup stirred up the peaceful majority of Northern Ireland’s Catholics, and many of the moderates detained by the British quickly grew into extremists behind bars. Previously scattered rebels organized themselves at Long Kesh,

on cash pressed from the tills of working-class Catholic shopkeepers and tradesmen, and they splashed it around like mobsters. To Scappaticci, their behavior seemed more like robbery than revolution.

So did the IRA’s assertion that the Protestant gangs were only a tool of the “real enemy,” the British occupiers. It seemed a neat trick, summoning the banshee of a dying British Empire. The Catholics could conceivably stare down the Protestants at home, but they could never beat the British at war. A campaign against the British would ensure the IRA’s necessity for generations to come. Scappaticci spoke out, mouthing off at pubs, questioning the IRA leadership. One night in 1978, after an argument over IRA policy, IRA men beat him and told him to straighten up: *Don’t cross the IRA.*

Scappaticci, the British intelligence services quickly recognized, had the makings of the perfect agent. A local man, born in Belfast. A credible IRA member. A disillusioned foot soldier. Beaten down. Ready.

Eventually, inevitably, an intelligence officer asked him: Would he spy?



About that time, in a small town called Newry, a teen-aged Kevin Fulton was honing his shooting skills in the countryside, hunting foxes and rabbits. Newry lies about forty miles south of Belfast, in the rolling borderland almost midway to Dublin. It's a charming little seaport, with a linen mill and a city hall that straddles the drowsy Clanrye River on a three-arched stone bridge.

Growing up in the 1970s, Fulton heard songs of rebellion and stories of derring-do. He longed for adventure. Something grander than rabbits. But his family seemed determined to cling to the dullness of a balanced life, even during the chaos of the Troubles, even in a border town. They were Catholic, yes, but not political. They attended church, not rallies. They had another son who served as a priest, instead of a soldier. They kept to themselves.

Just after his eighteenth birthday, Fulton made his way to Belfast's Grand Central Hotel, which British soldiers had sandbagged and billeted as a headquarters. There he enlisted with the British army's Royal Irish Rangers. It was an extraordinary move for a Catholic kid from a Catholic town—the British army! a miniature rebellion!—but it allowed him to shake off a sleepy home life and, as he put it, maybe “play around with guns and explosives.” He expected to travel to distant lands, maybe the Falklands, and stare down foreign fighters.

He showed up for basic training, just a blue-eyed lad with no experience in the world. But his commanders saw unusual potential in him—or, rather, they heard it, in the snip and slur of his Northern Irish accent. In a matter of weeks he received a tap on the shoulder from a military intelligence officer. The British had a plan, the man said, and a proposition: Would he spy?

After the Long Kesh internment debacle, the IRA gained ground against the British. On patrol in Belfast, British soldiers dodged stones by day and firebombs by night. Troops in armored Rovers and protective helmets made no good friends; they only made good targets. They needed a better strategy, and a powerful personality to implement it. And they soon found the man for the job: Brigadier General Frank Kitson.

Kitson rolled into Northern Ireland in the early 1970s with considerable experience battling insurgencies in Kenya, Malaya, and elsewhere. He had learned valuable lessons, particularly in Kenya in the 1950s battling the Mau Mau, a band of rebels fighting for independence. He had rounded up suspected Mau Mau supporters, who then endured interrogation and torture at the hands of the British authorities. The Mau Mau couldn't match the British militarily, so they resorted to guerrilla tactics, hiding in the hills and striking from the shadows. But Kitson followed them there, recruited locals with money and idealism, and infiltrated the insurgent ranks. With layer upon layer of sabotage, subterfuge, and duplicity, he obliterated the Mau Mau.

Kitson's methods proved so effective that he wrote a now-classic counterinsurgency book, *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency, Peacekeeping*, which laid out principles now being followed by American forces in Iraq. By the time Kitson arrived in Northern Ireland, *Low Intensity Operations* had become his instruction manual for war there. He stayed for only about two years, but in that brief period he set a new course for the British army that, for better or worse, carried it through the Troubles. By 1978, using tactics endorsed by Kitson, the army had for years been regularly stopping

vehicles at checkpoints and randomly arresting drivers to screen them. One of the men hauled in that year was Freddie Scappaticci, fresh from his beating by the IRA.

The account of why Scappaticci entered into intelligence work—whether he was driven by a desire for vengeance after his beating or wooed by his handlers over time—varies depending who recounts it. Regardless, he entered into it with vigor, ultimately signing on to work for a secret intelligence outfit called the Force Research Unit. Through the FRU, Scappaticci served a host of agencies, among them MI5, a paramilitary police unit called Special Branch, and army intelligence. Eventually he became one of the most important spies in Britain's history, working his way toward the IRA's heart.

His handlers gave him the code name Stakeknife.

Fulton resisted British intelligence work at first. After joining the army, he was sent to Berlin for Ranger training, where he learned to follow orders, to shoot, and to work with explosives. All the while, intelligence officers hovered nearby, whispering, promising, making appeals. Finally Fulton came around.

In 1981, two years after leaving his hometown of Newry, Fulton returned. If anyone asked about his absence, he rolled up his sleeves and showed them tattoos from his brief stint as a teenager in the Merchant Marines.

Evening after evening he showed up at the Hibernian Club, where IRA men unwound in their spare time. Fulton never asked where they went, or what they did. Never asked so much as the time of day, because questions made IRA men nervous. So he faded into the walls, just another son of Newry with working-class parents and a priest for a brother. He played pool. Drank pints. Laughed at tall tales. Drank more pints. Watched. Waited.

In time, with jokes told and pints drained, Fulton became one of the boys. And after several months, it finally happened: "Kevin! C'mere, boyo. Got an errand for you."

So it started. He delivered a package—a pistol and bullets—across town. He made another delivery, then another. Always on time and dependable. The jobs escalated in subtle increments, and as his errands reached farther, the packages grew deadlier. Bullets became pipe bombs, and pipe bombs became car bombs.

In carrying out his early errands, Fulton followed instructions handed down by his handlers in British intelligence. Whenever he overheard some tidbit of valuable information, some snippet about an IRA mission, he dialed a toll-free line and arranged a meeting. Usually his handlers told him to drive to an obscure parking lot, or a spot on a country roadside, and to wait there for a white delivery van. When it arrived, a side door would fly open and Fulton would climb in, typically greeted, he told me, by men representing the various agencies he served: MI5, military, Special Branch, all working with the secret Force Research Unit—the same group handling Scappaticci. They'd speed off to a safe house, often in a grand upscale neighborhood.

If the plan ever kinked—if his cover blew and he had no time for a phone call—he would follow an emergency plan. He'd drive out of town immediately and press a button that his handlers had installed under his dash. The button would send a tracking signal to British forces, who would then sweep in and extract him to safety.

Each night Fulton rocked himself to sleep repeating the mantra his handlers had given him: "The greater good. The greater good. The greater good." He and Scappaticci engaged in a difficult mathematics, a calculus of souls. If a man kills thirty people to save 3,000, has he done right? What about thirty for 300? Or thirty for thirty-one?

At one point I asked Fulton whether, in light of the human toll he would exact in the course of his career, someone could have served the greater good by killing him as a young man. I meant the question to be rhetorical. But Fulton just nodded.

"Yes," he said.

"You cannot pretend to be a terrorist," Fulton told me. "I had to be able to do the same thing as the IRA man next to me. Otherwise I wouldn't be there."

In 1980, after a couple of years working as a British spy—arranging meetings, handing over tidbits—Scappaticci joined the IRA's internal security unit, which IRA men called the Nutting Squad. "Nut" is Irish slang for the head. When the Nutting Squad found a snitch or a British spy, its interrogators typically tortured him, squeezed him for information, then "nuttled" him with a pair of bullets to the brain.

Scappaticci's history as an IRA sharpshooter gave him an advantage as an agent, and he quickly made his way to the top of the Nutting Squad. The achievement reveals either a tactical brilliance or a profound stroke of luck. The position gave him access to the IRA's innermost secrets: missions completed and upcoming; arms storage sites; travel and security details; bombing and assassination targets. Over several years he helped foil numerous killings and kidnappings, and the information he provided to the British so dazzled his handlers that they passed it along to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher herself.

Moreover, his position atop the Nutting Squad made him untouchable. If the IRA leaders ever suspected an infiltration, they reported it to the Nutting Squad—and so to Scappaticci. If his own activities ever drew suspicion, he could simply divert attention by fingering an innocent man. Some British press reports estimate he killed as many as forty people. A former British spy handler who worked at the time of Scappaticci's rise—a man who now goes by the name Martin Ingram—puts the death toll lower, but still "well into the tens," including other agents. He said it all fit into the larger

British strategy. "Agents have killed, and killed, and have killed," Ingram told me. "Many, many, many people."

Under Scappaticci's close direction, the Nutting Squad killed dozens of people, including:

Seamus Morgan, 24. Abducted, shot in the head, and dumped by a road in 1982.

John Corcoran, 45. Told his shooter, "Go easy," just before a bullet entered above his left ear, from behind, in 1985. He had eight children.

Paddy Flood, 29. Held captive for two months and tortured, then killed and left on a roadside. Twelve years later, it came out that Flood's murder was a mistake; he had been innocent.

The list goes on.

Scappaticci's handlers themselves went to extremes to protect their prize agent. Take the case of Francisco Notarantonio, the father of Scappaticci's childhood acquaintance Victor. In his day, the elder Notarantonio—who had been interned with Scappaticci at Long Kesh—had enjoyed a reputation as a tough IRA man. "Even when the queen came here," Victor told me, striking a certain triumphal tone, "before the Troubles started, my father got arrested and put away for a couple of days to make sure no harm came to the queen." But by 1987, the old man had mellowed and retired, both from driving his taxi and from the IRA. About that time, a powerful Protestant gang got a description of a man working high in the IRA. The gang suspected Scappaticci and dispatched a hit squad to execute him. As the squad moved toward Scappaticci, the alarmed British directed the killers toward another Italian IRA man: old Notarantonio. Shortly thereafter, Notarantonio lay dead in his bedroom, shot to death in front of his family.

I put it to Martin Ingram, the former spy handler, that in the case of Scappaticci, the British strategy had gone amok.

"No, I don't think so," he said. "I think it went very much to schedule."

"So you think—"

"I don't *think*, I know. He was acting to orders."

So the British government knew of Scappaticci's killings?

"Oh, yeah," he said. "The one preconception the IRA had is that if you are dirty—that is, if you have killed—then you cannot be an agent." Scappaticci exploited that misapprehension. "His best protection," Ingram continued, "was to keep killing."

If that's true, the British spy services beat the IRA by appealing to a belief that the United Kingdom wouldn't sacrifice its own subjects—especially its own agents.

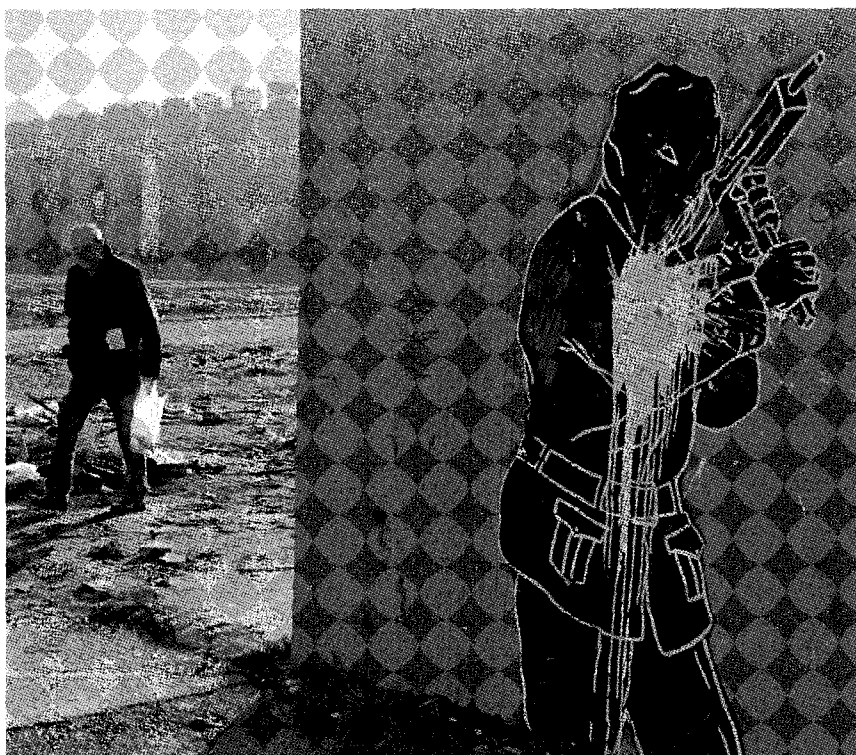
In Belfast I met with Denis Donaldson, a Sinn Féin party leader and an IRA veteran alleged to have run the IRA's intelligence wing. He's a folk hero who led hunger strikes early in the Troubles, and British investigators say he traveled the world, cultivating terrorist contacts in Spain,

Palestine, El Salvador, and elsewhere: a hard IRA man if there ever was one.

We sat at his kitchen table as he smoked, cursing British "interference" and "collusion." We had talked for a couple of hours before I noticed that the discreet television in the corner near the ceiling wasn't a television at all. It was a security monitor, and at the moment, it showed the front door through which I had entered. I noticed, too, a wrought-iron door that sealed off the upstairs, forming a redoubt.

When I mentioned the names of Scappaticci and Fulton, Donaldson's shoulders slumped. "I still can't believe it," he said, shaking his head. "My God."

His face seemed thin and gray, the face of a man who senses an end looming. A couple of weeks after we talked, the IRA laid down its arms, defeated by a confluence of circumstances: a change in the world's view of terrorism; apparent gains made by its political partner, Sinn Féin; and the steady infiltration of British spies.



Fulton worked as a painter by day, whitewashing the pocked walls of County Down, Northern Ireland. But secretly he made bombs, as part of a small team of demolitions experts who operated in both Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. Some of their bombs blew up military targets. Others blew up civilians. Fulton could sometimes sabotage missions. Often he could not.

By early 1993, Fulton and his team of bombers had found something less clumsy than wires to use in bomb and rocket detonation. They rigged bombs with photo sensors, which they triggered by popping off camera flashes. The results were lethal. Trouble was, other lights—bright headlights, or a tourist's disposable photo flash—could set off a bomb prematurely.

British intelligence services, in an effort to control IRA techniques through collaboration, secretly passed along a solution for the problem: a new technology—the infrared flash—that could be acquired only in America. Fulton’s handlers offered to facilitate an undercover IRA shopping mission to New York, and an MI5 officer flew across the Atlantic on the Concorde to make arrangements with American services in advance of Fulton’s arrival. “This was a terrorist organization operating in the United States,” Fulton told me, and it required cooperation. “It was a pretty big thing.”

Fulton traveled to New York with several thousand dollars, met secretly with his handlers, arranged the purchase, and returned to Northern Ireland, ready to create a deadly

As Fulton and I surveyed the bloody plain of his career, he said that McMurray’s death was the only one he truly regretted. I asked why, and his hands traced the universal hourglass symbol for “woman.” It seemed almost as though he didn’t want to say it aloud: he had constructed a moral code as a bomber and spy, some unspoken list of atrocities he refused to commit, and apparently it included killing a woman.

Other people paid a price, too. Consider the case of Eoin Morley, a member of Fulton’s bomb squad. After six years as a low-level IRA man, Morley quit and turned away from the IRA. Maybe he did it for the love of his girlfriend, and for her tiny children from a previous relationship. Maybe he did it because of an intra-IRA dispute. Maybe he did it because he already felt old at twenty-two.

That Easter Sunday night, Morley and his girlfriend put the children to bed and then turned their attention to a sink full of dishes. She washed, he dried. Someone knocked at the door. His girlfriend dried her hands, crossed the room, and opened the door. Two armed, masked men burst past her and grabbed Morley. They dragged him out into the garden and forced him to lie down. One of the masked men—Fulton, sources say—raised a high-powered assault rifle and shot Morley twice. The first bullet entered the back of his left thigh. Automatic rifles tend to rise as they’re fired; the second bullet thumped into Morley’s lower back.

As quickly as they had arrived, the men disappeared.

An ambulance took Morley to the hospital. His mother, Eilish, having gotten word of the incident, arrived soon after. Shootings were a way of life in Northern Ireland, and she expected him to rise from his bed and walk out—just like his relatives, just like his friends,

just like Lazarus. But then a nurse burst into the waiting room and said, “Would you come quickly?”

Eilish moved to the door of the surgery theater, but someone stopped her at a red line painted on the floor. She wasn’t sterilized and might infect the patient. Her son lay on a table in the center of the room. A doctor approached and said, “We couldn’t save him. It’s only a matter of minutes.” She suspects now that the doctor kept her behind the line not because of infection but to spare her the sight of her son’s body laid bare, bristling with instruments, tubes, wires.

Eilish told me this sitting in her living room, and throughout the story she stared at a spot on the floor just in front of her feet. Her voice strained. “I can see it here—a red line,” she said. She moved her hand in the air just before her knees, as though tousling a small boy’s hair. “I had to stand at that red line, and he died ... it probably took five minutes, but to me it was five hours ... I wasn’t allowed over the red line.”

She sat there for a long time after saying this, tousling an invisible boy’s hair and staring at a nonexistent red line. At that moment, both seemed more real than anything else in Northern Ireland.



new weapon. The IRA embraced the innovation, and it worked so well that other terrorist groups soon took notice and adapted the infrared photo-sensor bomb to their own wars. Today, Iraqi insurgents wield it against British and American troops in Iraq.

The British and American strategy—tracking insurgents by abetting them—seemed to follow a convoluted logic: that of a fighter who, trying to zero in on his opponent, waits for a few good shots to the nose. When Fulton traveled to New York with his handlers, he provided valuable inside information about the IRA’s new tactics. But as each such step offered insight, it demanded another step, and another. The information came at a high price.

In Newry, for instance, not long before Fulton’s trip to New York, a policewoman named Colleen McMurray and her colleague, Paul Slaine, were driving past the canal that runs through the center of town. Across the water, an IRA man triggered a flash unit, and a hidden rocket—called a “doodlebug”—burst from the grill of a car he had planted. It slammed into McMurray’s car, injuring Slaine—he lost both legs in the attack—and killing McMurray on the spot.

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I know what yer done, boyo.”

In the Belfast safe house, in 1994, Scappaticci continued to grill Fulton. The interrogation centered on something about a van. A phone. An assassination.

Fulton had pieced it together. In addition to his work as a bomber for the IRA, he specialized in procuring supplies: electronics, weapons, vehicles. Sometimes he stole the goods; other times, as in his trip to the States, his British handlers provided them. In 1994, when the IRA’s leaders needed a “basher”—a mobile phone with no traceable bill—and a clean van, they turned to Fulton. No problem. Fulton got both from his handlers, who outfitted them with snooping equipment. Not long after, the IRA attempted to kill Derek Martindale, a senior police detective; but armed officers managed to arrest the would-be assassins in their van near Martindale’s home. It was Fulton’s van. The IRA, suspecting that a snitch had betrayed the mission, launched a massive internal investigation.

Meanwhile, the police arrested anyone who might have been even remotely connected to the case, including Fulton. “Who do you work for?” they demanded. Fulton sat silent.

Eventually the police released him, and right away the IRA ordered him to the Belfast safe house, where Scappaticci interrogated him. A close relative of Fulton’s sat in another room, also awaiting time with Scappaticci.

The interrogator prodded Fulton: “What did you tell them?”

“Nothing.”

Fulton was telling the truth. He hadn’t known anything about the assassination attempt.

Scappaticci didn’t believe him. He suspected Fulton of being involved in more than just the Martindale betrayal, in fact.

“You provided both the phone and the vehicle used in the job. Couldn’t be a coincidence.”

Fulton denied everything, because he had no other choice. To confess anything—anything at all—would mean instant execution.

The denials worked. Scappaticci wasn’t sure. He needed more time. So he told Fulton to come back a couple of days later for a second round of interrogation. And to bring his relative.

Right away Fulton called for a meeting with his handlers and delivered what he thought was alarming news: Scappaticci was on to him.

“Oh, we’ve got the inside track,” they told him. “Don’t worry about it.”

Fulton had no choice but to return with his relative for the second interrogation. Again Scappaticci pressed him hard. Again Fulton kept up his denials. Scappaticci released Fulton again and told him to come back one more time.

As Fulton and his relative drove away, Fulton complained about having to come back for a third interrogation. The relative looked at him blankly. “What third interrogation?” A siren sounded in Fulton’s head. He’d been called back for

a third round, alone. Later that day a British handler, but not his own, contacted Fulton secretly to offer a private warning. “Don’t go to the last meeting,” he said. “You won’t go home.” Fulton blew out of Belfast and went into hiding.

After several meetings on Platform 13, Fulton invited me to his home. It’s an expensive flat, with heavy security, overlooking a well-known London landmark.

Inside the apartment, Fulton cooked a steak pie. While it baked, he put out laundry to dry. Then he took the plastic collar off a six-pack of canned beer and used a dainty pair of scissors to snip the rings. It’s better, he said, for the “wee fish and creatures of the sea.” He heard himself and grinned. “I’d make a fine housewife, wouldna?”

Over dinner he talked about New York, how he’d like to see it again. Outside the window, a construction crew worked near the entrance to the apartments. Fulton told me he won’t go out while they’re working, for fear one of them might be a boy from back home.

Some things he confesses, some he doesn’t. “I can’t admit to individual things,” he said, for fear of prosecution. “But I won’t lie to you.” Over the course of our time together, he developed a winking non-denial answer: “No comment.”

I asked if he had killed Eoin Morley.

“No comment.”

When the Nutting Squad found a snitch or a British spy, its interrogators typically tortured him, squeezed him for information, then “nuttied” him with a pair of bullets to the brain.

I asked if it was true that he had personally killed eleven people, not mentioning the uncounted bomb victims.

“No comment.”

I asked if that bothered him.

“You cannot *pretend* to be a terrorist,” he told me. “I had to be able to do the exact same thing as the IRA man next to me. Otherwise I wouldn’t be there.”

Fulton harbors complex feelings about the British spy services. His handlers in Northern Ireland abandoned him after his encounter with Scappaticci. His special toll-free number suddenly stopped working and eventually became the hotline for a forklift company. Fulton suspects that once the IRA loosed Scappaticci on him, his handlers decided he would make a good sacrifice: another mark of credibility for their prize agent, Stakeknife. His handlers betrayed him.

“He trusted the people he worked for,” Jane Winter told me. She heads a human-rights organization called British Irish Rights Watch, one of the few authorities respected by people on both sides of the continuing conflict. “He believed that he was doing something that—although it was difficult and unpleasant—was necessary and right. And then he found

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out the people that he trusted were not worthy of his trust. I think that must be very difficult for anybody.”

Scappaticci, too, eventually fell. In 2003, Francisco Notarantonio’s family instigated a police investigation that soon exposed the existence of the agent Stakeknife. Like Fulton, Scappaticci fled Northern Ireland. Rumors circulated that he had gone to Italy, specifically to a certain Hotel La Pace in Cassino, a hillside town between Naples and Rome. The manager at La Pace told me that yes, he remembered Scappaticci arriving from England, but no, he knew nothing of his next destination. That’s where Freddie Scappaticci’s trail goes cold.

In Belfast, I met with Scappaticci’s attorney, Michael Flanagan. In a neighborhood known as an IRA stronghold, we sipped coffee in a shop that had once been a Presbyterian church. I asked about Scappaticci’s career as a spy, and Flanagan shook his head. He has previously called the allegations “misinformation” and told me it was all British propaganda. The British, he said, just wanted to embarrass the IRA by pretending they had penetrated it. When I suggested that the Stakeknife affair might reflect as poorly on the British as on anyone else, he smiled.

A few weeks later, back in the United States, I received a phone call early one morning from a source in the United Kingdom. He said, “Yer man Denis Donaldson”—the legendary IRA hunger-striker who had met with me in his kitchen—“has just been expelled from Sinn Féin, about three minutes ago. For being a British spy.”

Donaldson, it turned out, had been spying on the IRA for two decades.

After my last visit with Kevin Fulton, we walked through London on a route that took us past Chelsea Barracks, a sprawling compound of bunker-like brick buildings not far from Buckingham Palace. The British army has stationed soldiers there for a century and a half, but the neighborhood has changed around it, and now Londoners consider it an eyesore. The Ministry of Defense plans to move its soldiers to another base and sell Chelsea Barracks for retail development. The site has outlasted its usefulness.

Fulton feels an affinity for the place.

In 1981, early in his stint as a terrorist, the IRA bombed the barracks, killing two people and injuring more than three dozen. As he and I approached the barracks, Fulton pointed out little strips of clear tape stuck to streetlights, electrical boxes, telephone poles—anything with a hinge or slot. Each piece of tape bore a serial number, he told me, and was meant to seal a potential hiding place for a bomb.

As we passed the Chelsea Barracks entry gate, Fulton noticed a sign announcing that this was Open Day, the annual recruitment day. Over the compound’s high walls, I could see little boys inside, scurrying up a recreational rock-climbing wall. Fulton’s eyes flashed. “You want to go in?” he said. “Let’s go in.”

We wandered in. Uniformed men and women staffed booths arrayed in the courtyard. As we picked our way through the displays, Fulton began looking for members of his original regiment, the Royal Irish Rangers. “Where’re the Royal Irish?” he asked passersby. “Have ye seen the Irish?” I noticed that Fulton wore a tiny green pin on his collar that read ROYAL IRISH RANGERS.

At last we saw a group of men sporting green plumes and tending a booth that featured terrorist bombs. On display were explosive devices from insurgencies around the world: Algeria, Palestine, Iraq. Fulton picked through them with a certain efficiency, looking for something. He grew more agitated by the moment. “Jaysus,” he grumbled to himself. “They’ve got nothing from Northern Ireland here.” He was searching, I realized, for his handiwork.

He strode up to a smiling, broad-chested soldier with red hair. “Have ye nothing from Northern Ireland?” he barked. “Nothing? Nothing a-tall, then?”

Fulton’s tone, his brogue, and the keenness of his interest focused the soldier, whose smile disappeared. “No, sir,” he said. “We haven’t.” His eyes traveled down and back up Fulton’s stocky frame.

Fulton caught himself and stuffed his hands into his pockets, and he turned to walk away. “Well,” he said. “If they weren’t such fucking terrorists, then maybe they could have a spot, aye?”



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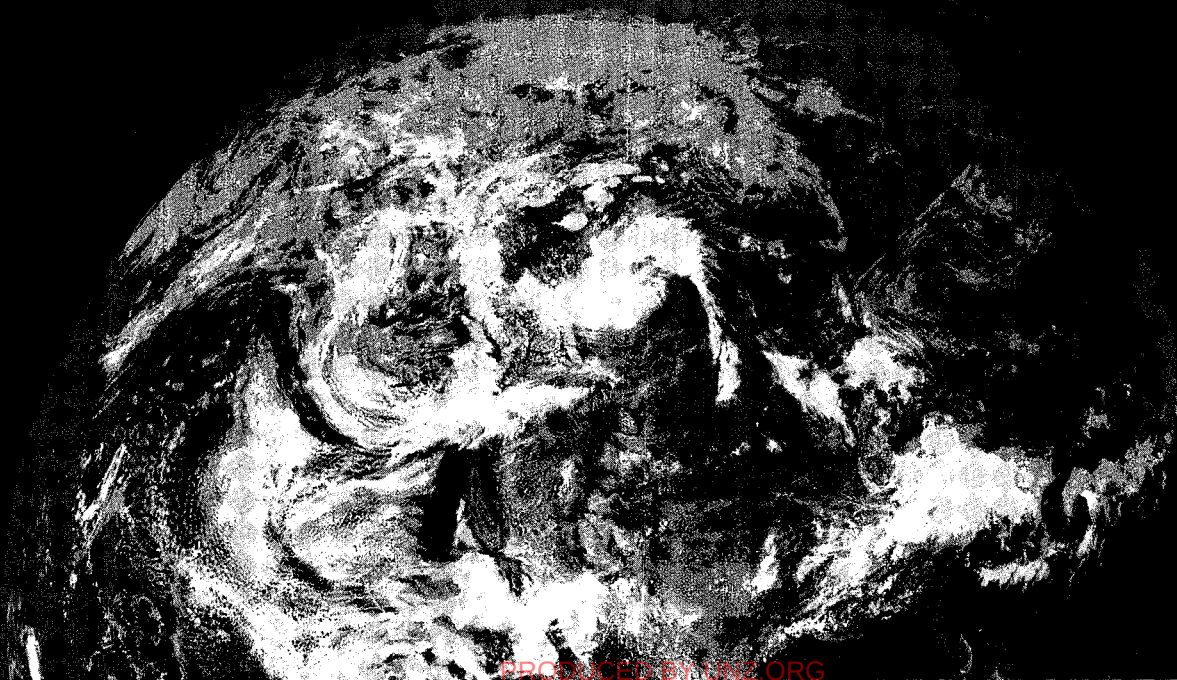
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BIG BROTHER IS LISTENING

The NSA has the ability to eavesdrop on your communications—landlines, cell phones, e-mails, BlackBerry messages, Internet searches, and more—with ease. What happens when the technology of espionage outstrips the law's ability to protect ordinary citizens from it?

BY JAMES BAMFORD

.....

On the first Saturday in April of 2002, the temperature in Washington, D.C., had taken a dive. Tourists were bundled up against the cold, and the cherry trees along the Tidal Basin were fast losing their blossoms to the biting winds. But a few miles to the south, in the Dowden Terrace neighborhood of Alexandria, Virginia, the chilly weather was not deterring Royce C. Lamberth, a bald and burly Texan, from mowing his lawn. He stopped only when four cars filled with FBI agents suddenly pulled up in front of his house. The agents were there not to arrest him but to request an emergency court hearing to obtain seven top-secret warrants to eavesdrop on Americans.

As the presiding justice of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, known as the FISA court, Lamberth had become accustomed to holding the secret hearings in his living room. "My wife, Janis ... has to go upstairs because she doesn't have a top-secret clearance," he noted in a speech to a group of Texas lawyers. "My beloved cocker spaniel, Taffy, however, remains at my side on the assumption that the surveillance targets cannot make her talk. The FBI knows Taffy well. They frequently play with her while I read some of those voluminous tomes at home." FBI agents will even knock on the judge's door in the middle of the night. "On the night of the bombings of the U.S. embassies in Africa, I started the first emergency hearings in my living room at 3:00 a.m.," recalled Lamberth. "From the outset, the FBI suspected bin Laden, and the surveillances I approved that night and in the ensuing days and weeks all ended up being critical evidence at the trial in New York."

"The FISA court is probably the least-known court in Washington," added Lamberth, who stepped down from it in 2002, at the end of his seven-year term, "but it has become one of the most important." Conceived in the aftermath of Watergate, the FISA court traces its origins to the mid-1970s, when the Senate's Church Committee investigated the intelligence community and the Nixon White House. The panel, chaired by Idaho Democrat Frank Church, exposed a long pattern of abuse, and its work led to bipartisan

legislation aimed at preventing a president from unilaterally directing the National Security Agency or the FBI to spy on American citizens. This legislation, the 1978 Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, established the FISA court—made up of eleven judges handpicked by the chief justice of the United States—as a secret part of the federal judiciary. The court's job is to decide whether to grant warrants requested by the NSA or the FBI to monitor communications of American citizens and legal residents. The law allows the government up to three days after it starts eavesdropping to ask for a warrant; every violation of FISA carries a penalty of up to five years in prison. Between May 18, 1979, when the court opened for business, until the end of 2004, it granted 18,742 NSA and FBI applications; it turned down only four outright.

Such facts worry Jonathan Turley, a George Washington University law professor who worked for the NSA as an intern while in law school in the 1980s. The FISA "courtroom," hidden away on the top floor of the Justice Department building (because even its location is supposed to be secret), is actually a heavily protected, windowless, bug-proof installation known as a Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility, or SCIF. "When I first went into the FISA court as a lowly intern at the NSA, frankly, it started a lifetime of opposition for me to that court," Turley recently told a group of House Democrats looking into the NSA's domestic spying. "I was shocked with what I saw. I was convinced that the judge in that SCIF would have signed anything that we put in front of him. And I wasn't entirely sure that he had actually *read* what we put in front of him. But I remember going back to my supervisor at NSA and saying, 'That place scares the daylights out of me.'"

Lamberth bristles at any suggestion that his court routinely did the administration's bidding. "Those who know me know the chief justice did not put me on this court because I would be a rubber stamp for whatever the executive branch was wanting to do," he said in his speech. "I ask questions. I get into the nitty-gritty. I know exactly what is going to be done and why. And my questions are answered, in every case, before I approve an application."

James Bamford is the author of two books on the NSA, The Puzzle Palace and its sequel, Body of Secrets. His most recent book is A Pretext for War: 9/11, Iraq and the Abuse of America's Intelligence Agencies. In January he joined the American Civil Liberties Union in its suit asking the courts to end NSA's warrantless spying.

It is true that the court has been getting tougher. From 1979 through 2000, it modified only two out of 13,087 warrant requests. But from the start of the Bush administration, in 2001, the number of modifications increased to 179 out of 5,645 requests. Most of those—173—involved what the court terms “substantive modifications.”

This friction—and especially the requirement that the government show “probable cause” that the American whose communications they are seeking to target is connected in some way to a terrorist group—induced the administration to begin circumventing the court. Concerned about preventing future 9/11-style attacks, President Bush secretly decided in the fall of 2001 that the NSA would no longer be bound by FISA. Although Judge Lamberth was informed of the president’s decision, he was ordered to tell no one about it—not even his clerks or his fellow FISA-court judges.

WHY THE NSA MIGHT BE LISTENING TO *YOU*

Contrary to popular perception, the NSA does not engage in “wiretapping”; it collects signals intelligence, or “sigint.” In contrast to the image we have from movies and television of an FBI agent placing a listening device on a target’s phone line, the NSA intercepts entire streams of electronic communications containing millions of telephone calls and e-mails. It runs the intercepts through very powerful computers that screen them for particular names, telephone numbers, Internet addresses, and trigger words or phrases. Any communications containing flagged information are forwarded by the computer for further analysis.

“The progress of science in furnishing the government with means of espionage is not likely to stop with wiretapping.” Justice Louis Brandeis wrote in 1928. Today the NSA’s capacity to eavesdrop is far beyond anything Justice Brandeis ever dreamed of.

The NSA’s task is to listen in on the world outside American shores. During the Cold War, the principal targets were the communications lines used by the Soviet government and military—navy captains calling their ports, fighter pilots getting landing instructions, army commanders out on maneuvers, and diplomats relaying messages to the Kremlin. But now the enemy is one that communicates very little and, when it does, uses the same telecommunications network as everyone else: a complex system of wires, radio signals, and light pulses encircling and crisscrossing the globe like yarn. Picking up just the right thread, and tracing it through the maze of strands, is difficult. Sometimes a thread leads back inside the United States. An internal agency report predicted a few years ago that the NSA’s worldwide sigint operation would demand a “powerful and permanent presence” on

the global telecommunications networks that carry “protected American communications.” The prediction has come true, and the NSA now monitors not only purely “foreign” communications but also “international” ones, where one end of the conversation might be in the United States. As a result, the issue at hand since the revelation last December of the NSA’s warrantless spying on American citizens is not the agency’s access to the country’s communications network—it already has access—but whether the NSA must take legal steps in preparing to target the communications of an American citizen.

It used to be that before the NSA could place the name of an American on its watch list, it had to go before a FISA-court judge and show that it had probable cause—that the facts and circumstances were such that a prudent person would think the individual was somehow connected to terrorism—in order to get a warrant. But under the new procedures put into effect by Bush’s 2001 order, warrants do not always have to be obtained, and the critical decision about whether to put an American on a watch list is left to the vague and subjective “reasonable belief” of an NSA shift supervisor. In charge of hundreds of people, the supervisor manages a wide range of sigint specialists, including signals-conversion analysts separating HBO television programs from cell-phone calls, traffic analysts sifting through massive telephone data streams looking for suspicious patterns, cryptanalysts attempting to read e-mail obscured by complex encryption algorithms, voice-language analysts translating the gist of a phone call from Dari into English, and cryptolinguists trying to unscramble a call on a secure telephone. Bypassing the FISA court

has meant that the number of Americans targeted by the NSA has increased since 2001 from perhaps a dozen per year to as many as 5,000 over the last four years, knowledgeable sources told *The Washington Post* in February. If telephone records indicate that one of the NSA’s targets regularly dials a given telephone number, that number

and any names associated with it are added to the watch lists and the communications on that line are screened by computer. Names and information on the watch lists are shared with the FBI, the CIA, the Department of Homeland Security, and foreign intelligence services. Once a person’s name is in the files, even if nothing incriminating ever turns up, it will likely remain there forever. There is no way to request removal, because there is no way to confirm that a name is on the list.

In December of 1997, in a small factory outside the southern French city of Toulouse, a salesman got caught in the NSA’s electronic web. Agents working for the NSA’s British partner, the Government Communications Headquarters, learned of a letter of credit, valued at more than \$1.1 million, issued by Iran’s defense ministry to the French

"HE'S IN THE BACKSEAT!"

The NSA searches the world's airwaves for faint whispers of suicide bombers and elusive terrorists. One Sunday in November of 2002, its listeners scored a rare hit

Inside the National Security Agency's massive headquarters at Fort Meade, Maryland—a complex so large that the U.S. Capitol Building could easily fit inside it several times over—analysts wearing earphones sit twisting dials and scanning frequencies, hoping to lock on to one of their assigned targets. On November 3, 2002, in Room 3E132, personnel assigned to the agency's Special Support Activity, which provides sensitive assistance to military commanders around the world, were in constant touch with a Cryptologic Support Group team in Yemen. The CSG—an NSA in microcosm, designed to be sent to critical areas on short notice—was part of a U.S. National Intelligence Support Team working with Yemeni intelligence officials to try to track down al-Qaeda members. Completing the team were Yemen-based CIA officials and their battery of unmanned Predator drones, each armed with deadly Hellfire missiles, based across the Red Sea in Djibouti. From there, the drones could easily reach anywhere in Yemen.

The CSG team was also patrolling the ether, hunting for any signals linked to its targets. High among those targets was Qaed Salim Sinan al-Harethi, a native Yemeni suspected of belonging to al-Qaeda and planning the attack on the USS Cole two years before. But like most of the NSA's new targets, Harethi knew that the United States was searching for him with an electronic dragnet, hoping to snag a brief satellite phone call and determine his location. He carried with him up to five phones—each one, analysts suspect, equipped with multiple cards to change its number. The NSA had a partial list of his numbers and, because Harethi was such a high-priority target, had set up an alarm to go off if any of them was used.



Wreckage from the Hellfire missile strike on Harethi's car

That afternoon, the alarm sounded—by some accounts, both at NSA headquarters and in the CSG's compound in Yemen. The analysts were surprised: the number had not been used for a considerable period of time. Using the Global Positioning System, they pinpointed the signal in the province of Marib, a remote, sand-swept landscape that was controlled by well-armed tribal chiefs and was largely off-limits to Yemeni police. Almost immediately, CIA operators in Djibouti began directing a Predator toward the target.

But the NSA analyst who was monitoring the satellite call was disappointed. Having listened many times over the years to tapes containing the voice of Harethi, he was convinced that the person on the phone was not him. Then he heard another sound. "He's in the backseat, and he's giving the driver directions!" the analyst said excitedly, according to an intelligence official familiar with the operation. "That's him!" shouted the analyst, as a colleague was quickly called over to confirm his opinion. Even though the conversation lasted a brief six seconds, both analysts were sure it was Harethi. Immediately, the information flashed to the Predator command in Djibouti. With the car in plain sight through the Predator's video sensors, the operators quickly fired a Hellfire missile, turning the vehicle into a ball of flames and killing all six of its occupants. —JAMES BAMFORD

company Microturbo. According to NSA documents, both the NSA and the GCHQ concluded that Iran was attempting to secretly buy from Microturbo an engine for the embargoed C-802 anti-ship missile. Faxes zapping back and forth between Toulouse and Tehran were intercepted by the GCHQ, which sent them on not just to the NSA but also to the Canadian and Australian sigint agencies, as well as to Britain's MI6. The NSA then sent the reports on the salesman making the Iranian deal to a number of CIA stations around the world, including those in Paris and Bonn, and to the U.S. Commerce Department and the Customs Service. Probably several hundred people in at least four countries were reading the company's communications. The question, however, remained: Was Microturbo shipping a missile engine to Iran? In the end, at the insistence of the U.S. government, the French conducted a surprise inspection just before the ship carrying the mysterious crate was set to sail for Iran. Inside were legal generators, not illegal missile engines.

Such events are central to the current debate involving the potential harm caused by the NSA's warrantless

domestic eavesdropping operation. Even though the salesman did nothing wrong, his name made its way into the computers and onto the watch lists of intelligence, customs, and other secret and law-enforcement organizations around the world. Maybe nothing will come of it. Maybe the next time he tries to enter the United States or Britain he will be denied, without explanation. Maybe he will be arrested. As the domestic eavesdropping program continues to grow, such uncertainties may plague innocent Americans whose names are being run through the supercomputers even though the NSA has not met the established legal standard for a search warrant. It is only when such citizens are turned down while applying for a job with the federal government—or refused when seeking a Small Business Administration loan, or turned back by British customs agents when flying to London on vacation, or even placed on a "no-fly" list—that they will realize that something is very wrong. But they will never learn why.

More than seventy-five years ago, Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis envisioned a day when technology would overtake the law. He wrote:

Subtler and more far-reaching means of invading privacy have become available to the government ... The progress of science in furnishing the government with means of espionage is not likely to stop with wiretapping. Ways may some day be developed by which the Government, without removing papers from secret drawers, can reproduce them in court, and by which it will be enabled to expose to a jury the most intimate occurrences of the home ... Can it be that the Constitution affords no protection against such invasions of individual security?

Brandeis went on to answer his own question, quoting from an earlier Supreme Court decision, *Boyd v. U.S.* (1886): "It is not the breaking of his doors, and the rummaging of his drawers that constitutes the essence of the offence; but it is the invasion of his indefeasible right of personal security, personal liberty, and private property."

EAVESDROPPING IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Today, the NSA's capability to eavesdrop is far beyond anything ever dreamed of by Justice Brandeis. With the digital revolution came an explosion in eavesdropping technology; the NSA today has the ability to scan tens of millions of electronic communications—e-mails, faxes, instant messages, Web searches, and phone calls—every hour. General Michael Hayden, director of the NSA from 1999 to 2005 and now principal deputy director of national intelligence, noted in 2002 that during the 1990s, e-communications "surpassed traditional communications. That is the same decade when mobile cell phones increased from 16 million to 741 million—an increase of nearly 50 times. That is the same decade when Internet users went from about 4 million to 361 million—an increase of over 90 times. Half as many land lines were laid in the last six years of the 1990s

MEDITATIO

In the back's low hollow sometimes
a weightless hand guides me, gentle pressure
so I tack soft as a sailboat. (*Go there*)

Soften the space between your eyes (smudge
of eucalyptus), the third eye
opens. There's the wide vermilion sky

that cradled us before birth,
and the sun pours its golden sap
to preserve me like His precious insect.

—MARY KARR

Mary Karr's fourth collection of poems, Sinners Welcome, has just been published. She is the Peck Professor of Literature at Syracuse University.

as in the whole previous history of the world. In that same decade of the 1990s, international telephone traffic went from 38 billion minutes to over 100 billion. This year, the world's population will spend over 180 billion minutes on the phone in international calls alone."

Intercepting communications carried by satellite is fairly simple for the NSA. The key conduits are the thirty Intelsat satellites that ring the Earth, 22,300 miles above the equator. Many communications from Europe, Africa, and the Middle East to the eastern half of the United States, for example, are first uplinked to an Intelsat satellite and then downlinked to AT&T's ground station in Etam, West Virginia. From there, phone calls, e-mails, and other communications travel on to various parts of the country. To listen in on that rich stream of information, the NSA built a listening post fifty miles away, near Sugar Grove, West Virginia. Consisting of a group of very large parabolic dishes, hidden in a heavily forested valley and surrounded by tall hills, the post can easily intercept the millions of calls and messages flowing every hour into the Etam station. On the West Coast, high on the edge of a bluff overlooking the Okanogan River, near Brewster, Washington, is the major commercial downlink for communications to and from Asia and the Pacific. Consisting of forty parabolic dishes, it is reportedly the largest satellite antenna farm in the Western Hemisphere. A hundred miles to the south, collecting every whisper, is the NSA's western listening post, hidden away on a 324,000-acre Army base in Yakima, Washington. The NSA posts collect the international traffic beamed down from the Intelsat satellites over the Atlantic and Pacific. But each also has a number of dishes that appear to be directed at domestic telecommunications satellites.

Until recently, most international telecommunications flowing into and out of the United States traveled by satellite. But faster, more reliable undersea fiber-optic cables have taken the lead, and the NSA has adapted. The agency taps into the cables that don't reach our shores by using specially designed submarines, such as the USS *Jimmy Carter*, to attach a complex "bug" to the cable itself. This is difficult, however, and undersea taps are short-lived because the batteries last only a limited time. The fiber-optic transmission cables that enter the United States from Europe and Asia can be tapped more easily at the landing stations where they come ashore. With the acquiescence of the telecommunications companies, it is possible for the NSA to attach monitoring equipment inside the landing station and then run a buried encrypted fiber-optic "backhaul" line to NSA headquarters at Fort Meade, Maryland, where the river of data can be analyzed by supercomputers in near real time.

Tapping into the fiber-optic network that carries the nation's Internet communications is even easier, as much of the information transits through just a few "switches" (similar to the satellite downlinks). Among the busiest are MAE East (Metropolitan Area Ethernet), in Vienna, Virginia, and MAE West, in San Jose, California, both owned by Verizon. By accessing the switch, the NSA can see who's e-mailing with whom over the Internet cables and can copy entire

messages. Last September, the Federal Communications Commission further opened the door for the agency. The 1994 Communications Assistance for Law Enforcement Act required telephone companies to rewire their networks to provide the government with secret access. The FCC has now extended the act to cover “any type of broadband Internet access service” and the new Internet phone services—and ordered company officials never to discuss any aspect of the program.

The NSA won’t divulge how many people it employs, but it is likely that more than 38,000 worldwide now work for the agency. Most of them are at Fort Meade. Nicknamed Crypto City, hidden from public view, and located halfway between Washington and Baltimore, the NSA’s own company town comprises more than fifty buildings—offices, warehouses, factories, laboratories, and a few barracks. Tens of thousands of people work there in absolute secrecy, and most never tell their spouses exactly what they do. Crypto City also houses the nation’s largest collection of powerful computers, advanced mathematicians, and skilled language experts.

The NSA maintains a very close and very confidential relationship with key executives in the telecommunications industry through their membership on the NSA’s advisory board. Created shortly after the agency’s formation, the board was intended to pull together a panel of science wizards from universities, corporate research labs, and think tanks to advise the agency. They keep the agency abreast of the industry’s plans and give NSA engineers a critical head start in finding ways to penetrate technologies still in the development phase.

One of the NSA’s strategies is to hire people away from the companies that make the critical components for telecommunications systems. Although it’s sometimes difficult for the agency to keep up with the tech sector’s pay scale, for many people the chance to deal with the ultimate in cutting-edge technology and aid national security makes working for the NSA irresistible. With the help of such workers, the agency reverse-engineers communication system components. For example, among the most crucial pieces of the Internet infrastructure are routers made by Cisco. “Virtually all Internet traffic,” says one of the company’s television ads, “travels across the systems of one company: Cisco Systems.” For the NSA, this is an opportunity. In 1999, Terry Thompson, then the NSA deputy director for services, said, “[Y]ou can see down the road two or three or five years and say, ‘Well, I only need this person to do reverse-engineering on Cisco routers (that’s a good example) for about three or five years, because I see Cisco going away as a key manufacturer for routers and so I don’t need that expertise. But I really need somebody today and for the next couple of years who knows Cisco routers inside and out and can help me understand how they’re being used in target networks.’”

THE TEMPTATIONS OF SECRECY

The National Security Agency was born in absolute secrecy. Unlike the CIA, which was created publicly by a congressional act, the NSA was brought to life by a top-secret memorandum signed by President Truman in 1952, consolidating the country’s various military sigint operations into a single agency. Even its name was secret, and only a few members of Congress were informed of its existence—and they received no information about some of its most important activities. Such secrecy has lent itself to abuse.

During the Vietnam War, for instance, the agency was heavily involved in spying on the domestic opposition to the government. Many of the Americans on the watch lists of that era were there solely for having protested against the war. Among the names in the NSA’s supercomputers were those of the folk singer Joan Baez, the pediatrician Benjamin Spock, the actress Jane Fonda, the civil-rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., and the newspaper editor David Kahn, whose standard history of cryptology, *The Codebreakers*, contained information the NSA viewed as classified. Even so much as writing about the NSA could land a person a place on a watch list. The NSA, on behalf of the FBI, was also targeting religious groups. “When J. Edgar Hoover gives you a requirement for complete surveillance of all Quakers in the United States,” recalled Frank Raven, a former senior NSA official, “and when Richard M. Nixon is a Quaker and he’s the president of the United States, it gets pretty funny.”

Tens of thousands of people work at NSA’s “Crypto City” headquarters in absolute secrecy. Most of them never tell their spouses exactly what they do.

Of course, such abuses are hardly the exclusive province of the NSA; history has repeatedly shown that simply having the ability to eavesdrop brings with it the temptation to use that ability—whatever the legal barriers against that use may be. For instance, during World War I, the government read and censored thousands of telegrams—the e-mail of the day—sent hourly by telegraph companies. Though the end of the war brought with it a reversion to the Radio Act of 1912, which guaranteed the secrecy of communications, the State and War Departments nevertheless joined together in May of 1919 to create America’s first civilian eavesdropping and code-breaking agency, nicknamed the Black Chamber. By arrangement, messengers visited the telegraph companies each morning and took bundles of hard-copy telegrams to the agency’s offices across town. These copies were returned before the close of business that day.

A similar tale followed the end of World War II. In August of 1945, President Truman ordered an end to censorship. That left the Signal Security Agency (the military successor to the Black Chamber, which was shut down in 1929) without its raw intelligence—the telegrams provided by the telegraph companies. The director of the SSA sought access to cable

traffic through a secret arrangement with the heads of the three major telegraph companies. The companies agreed to turn all telegrams over to the SSA, under a plan code-named Operation Shamrock. It ran until the government's domestic spying programs were publicly revealed, in the mid-1970s.

The discovery of such abuses in the wake of the Watergate scandal led Congress to create select committees to conduct extensive investigations into the government's domestic spying programs: their origin, extent, and effect on the public. The shocking findings turned up by the Church Committee finally led to the formation of permanent Senate and House intelligence committees, whose primary responsibility was to protect the public from future privacy abuses. They were to be the FISA court's partner in providing checks and balances to the ever-expanding U.S. intelligence agencies. But it remains very much an open question whether these checks are up to the task at hand.

The NSA is close to achieving its ultimate goal of intercepting and reviewing every syllable and murmur zapping into, out of, or through the United States.

WHO WATCHES THE WATCHMEN?

Today, the NSA has access to more information than ever before. People express their most intimate thoughts in e-mails, send their tax returns over the Internet, satisfy their curiosity and desires with Google searches, let their hair down in chat rooms, discuss every event over cell phones, make appointments with their BlackBerrys, and do business by computer in WiFi hot spots.

NSA personnel, the customs inspectors of the information superhighway, have the ultimate goal of intercepting and reviewing every syllable and murmur zapping into, out of, or through the United States. They are close to achieving it. More than a dozen years ago, an NSA director gave an indication of the agency's capability. "Just one intelligence-collection system," said Admiral William O. Studeman, referring to a listening post such as Sugar Grove, "can generate a million inputs per half hour." Today, with the secret cooperation of much of the telecommunications industry, massive dishes vacuuming the airwaves, and electronic "packet sniffers," software that monitors network traffic, diverting e-mail and other data from fiber-optic cables, the NSA's hourly take is in the tens of millions of communications. One transatlantic fiber-optic cable alone has the capacity to handle close to 10 million simultaneous calls. While most communications flow through the NSA's electronic net unheard and unread, those messages associated with persons on the agency's watch lists—whether guilty or innocent—get kicked out for review.

As history has shown, the availability of such vast amounts of information is a temptation for an intelligence agency. The criteria for compiling watch lists and collecting information may be very strict at the beginning of such a program, but the reality—in a sort of bureaucratic law of expansion—is that

it will draw in more and more people whose only offense was knowing the wrong person or protesting the wrong war.

Moreover, as Internet and wireless communications have grown exponentially, users have seen a corresponding decrease in the protections provided by the two institutions set up to shield the public from eavesdroppers. The first, the FISA court, has simply been shunted aside by the executive branch. The second, the congressional intelligence committees, have quite surprisingly abdicated any role. Created to be the watchdogs over the intelligence community, the committees have instead become its most enthusiastic cheerleaders. Rather than fighting for the public's privacy rights, they are constantly battling for more money and more freedom for the spy agencies.

Last November, just a month before *The New York Times* broke the story of the NSA's domestic spying, the American Bar Association publicly expressed concern over Congress's oversight of FISA searches. "The ABA is concerned that there is inadequate congressional oversight of government investigations undertaken pursuant to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act," the group stated, "to assure that such investigations do not violate the First, Fourth, and Fifth Amendments to the Constitution."

And while the administration did brief members of Congress on the decision to bypass FISA, the briefings were limited to a "Gang of Eight"—the majority and minority leaders of the House and Senate and the chairmen and ranking members of the two intelligence committees. None of the lawmakers insisted that the decision be debated by the joint committees, even though such hearings are closed.

Frank Church, the Idaho Democrat who led the first probe into the National Security Agency, warned in 1975 that the agency's capabilities

could be turned around on the American people, and no American would have any privacy left, such [is] the capability to monitor everything: telephone conversations, telegrams, it doesn't matter. There would be no place to hide. If this government ever became a tyranny, if a dictator ever took charge in this country, the technological capacity that the intelligence community has given the government could enable it to impose total tyranny, and there would be no way to fight back, because the most careful effort to combine together in resistance to the government, no matter how privately it is done, is within the reach of the government to know. Such is the capacity of this technology.

It was those fears that caused Congress to enact the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act three years later. "I don't want to see this country ever go across the bridge," Senator Church said. "I know the capacity that is there to make tyranny total in America, and we must see to it that [the National Security Agency] and all agencies that possess this technology operate within the law and under proper supervision, so that we never cross over that abyss. That is the abyss from which there is no return." ▀

HOW TO SHAMPOO IN FRENCH

A reference guide

BY CON CHAPMAN

Illustration by Marc Rosenthal

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Forget Iraq, Derrida, and Jerry Lewis. It's time to turn our attention to the principal remaining obstacle to Franco-American understanding: French shampoo labels.

You know what I'm talking about. You're in the shower at a beach or ski house, someone is knocking on the door for his or her turn, and you find that your hostess, worldly sophisticate that she is, has stocked the bathroom with hair-care products from the nation that thinks snails are snacks.

When told to "*Moussez, nettoyez et répétez,*" *l'un quel est pour faire?* (What is one to do?)

You, dear reader, are in luck. The author took two years of French in high school, and most of a semester in college. What follows is a handy reference guide that, if properly laminated, you can take into the shower with you to avoid using the conditioner before the shampoo and spending the rest of your getaway weekend looking like your hair was flattened down with walrus fat. *Commençons* (Let us begin) our deconstruction of *la bouteille typique de shampooing* (the typical shampoo bottle).

"*Un Système nettoyant ultra doux, spécialement conçu pour protéger la longévité et l'éclat des cheveux colorés,*" begins the tiny text on the back of a leading brand of *shampoo Français*.

French thinkers are systematic, and their approach to shampooing is no exception. This introductory phrase, literally translated, means that the shampoo you are about to use is part of an ultra-sweet cleaning system that is specially conceived for old protégées who eat pastries on colored horses. So far, so good.

"*Reconstruit les cheveux abîmés en pénétrant dans la tige capillaire, optimisant ainsi la cohésion et la revitalization.*"

The shampoo reconstructs damaged horses through the capillaries of the tiger, making the two animals stick together and thereby "revitalizing" them. (To put it mildly!)

"*Rétablit la santé des cheveux et leur rend leur brillance.*"

Restores horses' health and makes them smart. More of the same self-promotion. As anyone who has ever tried to read Proust knows, the French like to repeat themselves.

"*MODE D'EMPLOI: Appliquer sur les cheveux mouillés et faire mousser en massant délicatement. Bien rincer. Répétez au besoin.*"

As with the English language, really important stuff in French is written in capital letters. Translation: "EMPLOYEES: Apply to the wet horses and make delicate massive cats. Good rinsing. Repeat with the needy."

"*NOUS SOMMES CONTRE LES TESTS SUR ANIMAUX.*"

Here's where things get tricky. After instructing us to wash various nonhuman creatures, the narrator tells us that he is opposed to the use of shampoo on animals. How can we reconcile this knotty contradiction? For that, one must use conditioner, which, as every schoolgirl knows, straightens out snarls and tangles. Let's go to *la bouteille typique de crème de la rince*:

"*Après le shampooing, frictionnez les cheveux et le cuir chevelu avec une petite quantité du produit—étez dans les cheveux à l'aide d'un peigne. Laissez agir pendant 5 minutes. Rincez abondamment.*"

Meaning: "After shampooing, rub your horse and its hairy leather with a little produce. Using a paintbrush, put the horse in its stall. Let him wear your necklace for five minutes. Then rinse him abundantly."

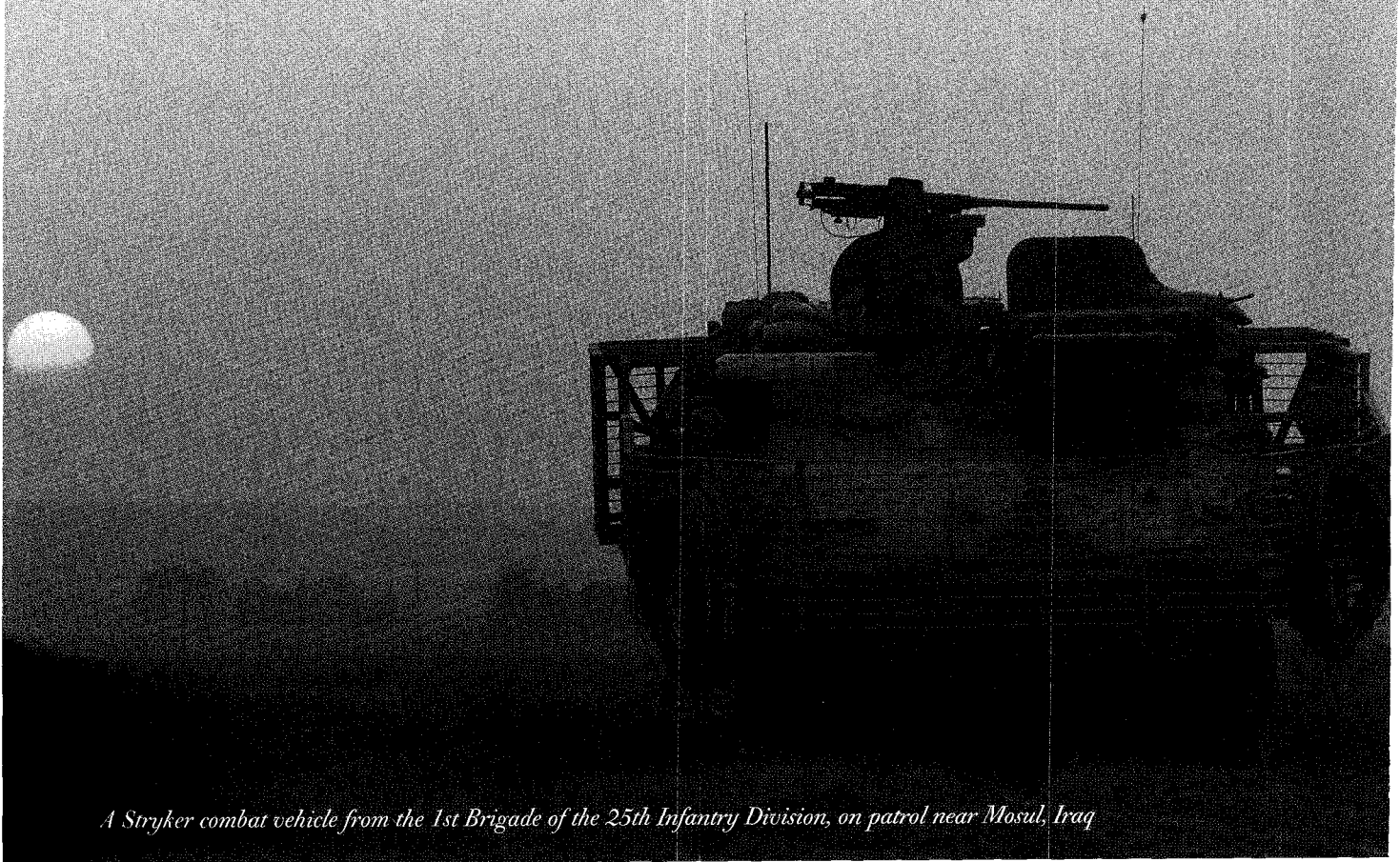
Why do we do this? Because the conditioner contains *des extraits purs de pollen d'abeille*—bee pollen. It is better for the horse to be shampooed indoors than to be outside and risk the painful swelling, or even death, that can come with a bee sting.

Voilà! Nous comprenons! (We understand!)

What is *meilleur de tout*, or "best of all," is that French beauty products are, as our shampoo bottle tells us, "*assez doux pour l'utilisation quotidienne*"—gentle enough to be used by boring people.

I hear one of them banging on the bathroom door right now. ☹

Con Chapman is the author of The Year of the Gerbil, a history of the 1978 Red Sox-Yankees pennant race, and A View of the Charles, a novel.



A Stryker combat vehicle from the 1st Brigade of the 25th Infantry Division, on patrol near Mosul, Iraq

THE COMING NORMALCY?

Whatever else the American occupation of Iraq may be, it serves as a laboratory for ideas about how to wring stability out of chaos—the great foreign-policy challenge of the twenty-first century

BY ROBERT D. KAPLAN

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The Iraqi city of Mosul is an age-old caravan crossroads whose history defies the concept of the twentieth-century nation-state—the kind of nation-state the U.S. military occupation of Iraq is trying to hold together (if not create), and to keep from imploding into full-scale civil war.

Historic trade routes have linked Mosul to cities in Syria, Turkey, and Iran, bringing cultural as well as commercial exchanges. The Arabic language in Mosul bears Kurdish and Syriac influences. There is a large community of Chaldaeans—descendants of Christians who were converted (eons ago) from Nestorianism to Catholicism. For a long time, this city was a seat of Catholic missionary activity. Seljuk

Turks held Mosul in the Middle Ages and Ottomans held it in the modern era, with a Persian occupation in between. Mosul's degenerating old quarter, with its beetling Ottoman walls and elegantly stuccoed twelfth-century Seljuk minaret, is testimony to this cosmopolitan lineage.

After the fall of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I, the oil-rich Turkish *vilyet* of Mosul was incorporated into a newly created Iraq, ensuring that the mostly Arab polity of Sunnis and Shiites would include a large (one-quarter) share of non-Arab Kurds, Turcomans, and Assyrians. Mosul emblemizes the ethnic and sectarian divisions that have made modern Iraq so untenable, helping it to fall victim to the most suffocating of dictatorships.

Robert D. Kaplan is a national correspondent for The Atlantic. He is the author of Imperial Grunts: The American Military on the Ground (2005).

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE U.S. ARMY/MIKE BUYTAS

I came to Mosul, a city of more than 2 million, after one set of national elections; I would leave just before another. The former had ratified the new Iraqi constitution; the latter would select political parties for parliament. In the Mosul region, the first election had seen a voter turnout of more than 80 percent. Mosul is a success story, although the success is relative, partial, and tenuous. The credit for what success there has been belongs to one of the U.S. Army's Stryker brigade combat teams that recently departed Iraq: the 1st Brigade of the 25th Infantry Division, based out of Fort Lewis, Washington.

When the 1-25 "Lancers" arrived in Mosul, in September of 2004, the city and its environs were a violent no-go zone, having seen several thousand insurgent attacks, not to mention more than a thousand explosions from improvised explosive devices, or IEDs. The local police had largely deserted, dropping from an on-paper force of 10,000 to an irrelevance of 300. But by the time 1-25 left Mosul, a year later, mortar attacks alone had fallen from 300 a month to fewer than ten. Other forms of insurgent activity dropped to the point where international journalists no longer considered Mosul an important part of the ongoing Iraq story—a fact evidenced by their thin presence in the city. Meanwhile, the local police force was now back up to 9,000, and the number of police stations had expanded from five to twenty-four. More important, the number of intelligence tips called in by the local population had risen from essentially zero to some 400 per month.

The kind of chaos that 1-25 had alleviated in Mosul has been an abiding interest of mine. Twelve years ago in this magazine, I published an article, "The Coming Anarchy," about the institutional collapse of Third World countries owing to ethnic and sectarian rivalries, demographic and environmental stresses, and the growing interrelationship between war and crime. Was it possible that Iraq, of all places, might offer some new ideas about how situations of widespread anarchy can be combated? It certainly was the case that, despite a continuing plague of suicide bombings, significant sections of the country were slowly recovering from large-scale violence, as well as from the effects of decades of brutal dictatorship. The very U.S. military that had helped to bring about the anarchy in Iraq was now worth studying as a way to end it, both here and elsewhere in the Third World.

The 1-25 Lancers' shaky achievement does credit to the brigade-level transformation of the U.S. Army, the institution known derisively to the Green Berets of the Special Forces as "Big Army" or "Mother Army." And they are right: Big Army is still too much of a vertical, dinosaurian, Industrial Age organization. Yet that is changing, partly because of the new emphasis on brigades.

A brigade is only a third or half the size of a division. Its headquarters element is less bureaucratic and top-heavy with colonels than that of a division (to say nothing of a corps). The very size of a brigade can be custom-fitted to the situation. Putting brigades first represents an organi-

zational means for dealing with a more chaotic, unconventional world. It is the kind of bureaucratic reform that the military is embracing faster than the financially starved State Department or the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The credit for this radically changed emphasis belongs to successive Army chiefs of staff, particularly Eric Shinseki and Peter Schoomaker.

New hardware, such as the Stryker combat vehicle, also plays a big role, facilitating a change in the relationships between captains in the field and majors and lieutenant colonels back at battalion headquarters. The Stryker—with its added safety features that drastically reduce casualties from IEDs and suicide bombs, its ability to travel great distances without refueling, and a computer system that gives captains and noncommissioned officers situational awareness and the latest intelligence for many miles around—has helped liberate field units from dependence on headquarters.

Autonomy is further encouraged by the flat "intelligence architecture" of the Stryker brigades. Information now comes to captains less and less from battalion headquarters, and more and more from other junior officers in other battalions, via informal e-mail networks, as well as directly from Iraqi units. The lieutenant colonel who commands an infantry battalion, and the major who is the captain's executive officer, do not always have to be consulted. Given the results, the commanding officers like it that way.

One evening in March of 2005, a captain acting on a tip from an Iraqi source—and seeking no permission from above—carried out six raids in Mosul over a few hours, netting four-

"It's a matter of suppression," says Captain Mann. "You do kinetic ops until you find that magical balance: an acceptable level of violence that allows you to shift resources to nation-building. Don't overdo the killing of bad guys."

teen out of twenty members of an insurgent cell, plus large numbers of weapons and several vehicles. In August, a tip that the insurgent leader Abu Zubayr was planning to assassinate a local police chief led a company captain to develop a plan to trap Abu Zubayr by using the tipster as bait. The captain had Abu Zubayr's movements tracked by means of an unmanned surveillance plane. Abu Zubayr was cornered and killed, along with two other key area insurgents.

In these very early stages, at least, ending anarchy is about, well, ending anarchy. A nation-state must monopolize the use of force. In Iraq, that means killing some people and apprehending others. "You're dealing with a gang mentality," explained Captain Phillip Mann of Antioch, California, a thirty-two-year-old intelligence officer and graduate of Fresno State University. "There is a pool of young men in Mosul without jobs who sell drugs, and do kidnappings. With a high

inflation rate and little economy, being an insurgent pays. You've got to make the insurgency a very unattractive profession to these people, who are not motivated by religious ideology." One thing they sell is pornography, which is found by the new Stryker brigade in Mosul whenever insurgent hideouts are overrun. "We've adopted a gang-tackle approach," Mann went on. "If we get shot at, like in Palestine [a retirement community for former regime generals in southeast Mosul, which supported the insurgents], we surround the area and go house to house, every time. We keep doing this till people get tired and start helping us. Our message: 'We don't give in—we're not going away, so work with us.'"

"It's a matter of suppression," he continued. "You do kinetic ops [that is, combat operations] until you find that magical balance—an acceptable level of violence that allows you to shift resources to nation-building. Don't overdo the killing of bad guys. Ending the violence completely is a foolish goal, without development."

And in a large, unconventional battlefield with relatively few combatants inside of it—a battlefield where killing the enemy is easy but finding him difficult—that means pushing power out to junior officers and noncoms, by giving them immediate access to vital intelligence and the authority to act on it. As Captain Mann observed, "I've got my own urban battlespace in a part of Mosul populated by 450,000 people, and I'm trying to find 100 insurgents, who can slip in and out of that battlespace. Rather than satellites and other strategic assets feeding information down to brigade, to battalion, and finally to me, I'm under pressure to get the stuff first by being a detective who pieces together crimes."

It never fails: the closer you get to a frontline infantry unit, the greater the pride and intelligence, the more erect the bearing. At Baghdad International Airport, I consulted a nasty young enlistee who grumpily lifted her eyes from a paperback to tell me that she didn't know the flight times to Mosul, though knowing such information was the sole purpose of her being in Iraq. But in Mosul, I found myself in a tactical operations center, or TOC, staffed with noncoms and junior and middle-level officers like Captain Mann, whose whole identity—as revealed through the game-on clarity of their faces—seemed to be their jobs.

The TOC belonged to the 4th Battalion of the 23rd Infantry Regiment, part of the 172nd Stryker Brigade. The commander of 4-23 was Lieutenant Colonel John G. Norris, of Louisville, Kentucky, a short and stocky former Marine noncom. I spent my first days in Mosul alongside Norris, watching him facilitate relationships between local rulers who had once been hostile to each other. This had historically been an unconventional, Special Forces kind of job. But as combat gave way to politics in Mosul—as well as in other parts of Iraq—regular Army officers found themselves dealing increasingly with situations that would have been all too familiar to officials of the British and French nineteenth-century colonial services.

It began with a meeting of the notables of Hamman-al-Alil, a town of 20,000 south of Mosul. First we drove east

across the Tigris River to pick up reporters from a reopened Iraqi television station, who would cover the event. Sitting in the roomy interior of the Stryker, I saw the Tigris through the thermal imagery and smelled the freshness of the river through the air hatch. Then came the smell of raw sewage as we entered a wilderness of automobile chop shops that had months before been a haven for insurgents. Kids waved and ran after the Strykers with "gimme-a-soccer-ball" pleas. The television station had a brand-new 500-foot tower. A second one was going up, paid for with Coalition funds.

We drove down a road that had been paved originally by the 101st Airborne Division, only to be "TEDed to shit by insurgents," as one soldier told me, then repaved by Iraqi contractors hired by the American military. That was another tactic against chaos: be relentless, particularly in the face of bad trends. If foreign aid to Africa could still be justified, and even continue to inspire idealism despite decades of failure and corruption, how could it be otherwise for civil-affairs projects in Iraq in the face of a mere two years of difficulties?

The Stryker convoy passed along the Tigris, through ash-brown, dome-shaped hills bordered by fields of melons and sunflowers. The water was divided and re-divided by islands and sandbars thick with reeds. The sharp contours gave every feature of the landscape an iconic quality. Here and there, I saw a signature detail of post-Saddam Hussein Iraq: a brick hovel with a new satellite dish on the roof.

Insurgents had made Hamman-al-Alil another no-go zone, destroying the town-council offices and killing the mayor's nephew, then cutting off his head and delivering it to the mayor. The mayor and the council went to ground. But continuous raids by the Americans and the newly stood-up Iraqi army and police, trained and equipped by the Americans, gradually put an end to the insurgents' operations. A clinic, a police station, and city offices were now nearing completion, and the mayor, Khalif Khader Mohammed Hussein al-Jabouri, was back. Norris now planned to build a badly needed bridge across the Tigris here.

Not that the town looked good: it presented a dismal pageant of muddy, garbage-strewn streets awaiting the first, meager fruits of a problematic new stability. The council members, adorned in traditional keffiyahs and gold-braided regalia, pleaded with Norris for more public-works projects. The town didn't just look awful through my eyes; it looked awful in theirs, too. Their offer was blunt: "We'll provide twenty-four-hour security and workers if you'll pay for the projects." The offer of safety was backed up with the muscle of the dominant Jabouri tribe, which had decided to go with the Americans against the insurgents—but only after the American military had, month after month, demonstrated its resolve. The fact that the new police chief, Khaled Hussein al-Hamdani, was a Hamdani tribesman—related to the same Hamdani tribesmen who had been bodyguards for Uday and Qusai Hussein—made for a governing coalition in the town.

Forming such an alliance was easier done in a town than in a city. In the rural areas, everyone knew one another, and



the tribes—a tangible form of authority you could get your hands around, unlike the new democratic governing bodies—were therefore a potential counterweight to the insurgents.

Mayor Khalif walked in. With his roughed-up hair, he looked the epitome of the rumpled, preoccupied politician, going through a checklist of points—a modern sort of fellow, it seemed. He began, “There was a bridge here in antiquity, but not under Saddam. [Rebuilding] the bridge would confirm the American commitment.” That was not the end of his list.

Norris said that help was coming in the form of PRTs (civilian-military provincial reconstruction teams). “The American military will continue, we will facilitate. We will not leave prematurely,” he said. “*Inshallah*,” the members of the town council replied: “God willing.”

Throughout the meeting, I sat between two council members. One of them, Mohamed Najim Shakara, had lost three brothers to insurgent violence. The other, Khamis Mohamed Jassim, had been attacked twice by insurgents, and he pulled up his robe, LBJ-style, to show me the bullet wounds on his hip and lower abdomen.

After the meeting, Norris offered a reflection on the Iraqis he deals with. “Some love us. Some hate us because we’ve accidentally killed their relatives. Others would rather we just leave. But whenever we kill a terror hideout and return an area to some semblance of normalcy, people come out and say thank you. A big problem is the daily, low-level kidnappings of professionals that don’t make news but help provide a cash flow for the insurgents.

“On the other hand,” he went on, “we benefit because the international media doesn’t want to leave the greater Baghdad area. With no international media in Mosul on a regular basis, there’s been less of an incentive [for the insurgents] to do car bombings.”

The next morning—Thanksgiving Day, as it happened—Norris traveled east of the river to the Nimrud region. While Hamman-al-Alil had relative peace and some incipient development projects, Nimrud had only relative peace. That was because its relative peace was brand-new, resulting not just from the relentless aggression of the U.S. military and the new Iraqi army but from a political deal that Hamman-al-Alil’s Mayor Khalif had brokered for Nimrud, with Norris’s support. The deal involved an informal power-sharing agreement between Nimrud’s Mayor Ahmed Obeed Isa, an ethnic Kurd, and the district police chief, Salim Salih Mishal Needa. Not that relations were good between the two men—they hated each other. Mayor Isa seemed to be a transparent, modern fledgling democrat. Chief Salim had the reputation of a thug. But re-establishing order in Nimrud following the insurgency’s high-water mark here in 2004 meant allowing Chief Salim to wield the real power in the area. Only recently had Norris begun nudging him aside to allow Mayor Isa to govern.

Of course, this was classic political-science theory: sudden, wrenching transitions are generally bad. Russia tried to move abruptly from Communist authoritarianism to Western parliamentary democracy, and got chaos as a result. The Iberian Peninsula, following a more successful model earlier in the twentieth century, had gone from iron-fisted authoritarianism to successively milder versions of it in the later Franco, Salazar, and Caetano periods, so when democracy did arrive in Spain and Portugal, it did so competently. Samuel Huntington’s *Political Order in Changing Societies* (1968) has been voted one of the great political-science books of the twentieth century because, among other things, it lays out this principle: the real divide in political systems is not between those that are democratic and those that aren’t but between those that have strong institutions and those that have weak ones.

Norris had not read Huntington's book, nor had he been following discussions in Washington about the imposition of democracy. He was simply using common sense. He had figured out on his own that Chief Salim might have been a bad guy, but for the moment he served a useful purpose. Chief Salim constituted a transitional figure, one who could set the stage for the emergence of the lawyerly Mayor Isa. The invasion of Iraq was cataclysmic for the country's politics, down to the village level. Stabilizing Iraq meant reversing the pre-war direction before you could move forward. It was what the Marines had learned in the Sunni Triangle in 2004,

nuance, embarrassment, or a sense of irony. Only later would reducing chaos be about addressing the "root causes." Initially, it was about the reassertion of authority.

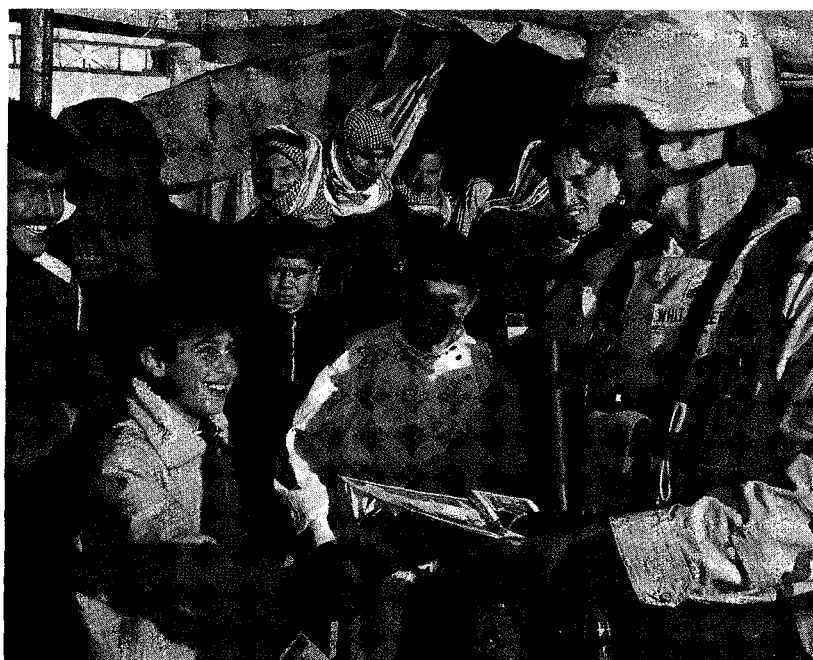
Chief Salim had a fixed stare that never changed, no matter who was speaking; and yet he seemed to possess a sort of mournful intelligence about human affairs, a kind of intelligence that cannot be measured by standardized tests. The reopened local television network was covering the meeting. The media presence might mean less candor, but it would serve the larger purpose of committing these officials to what they actually said.

In the first round of speeches, everyone praised everyone else. In the second round, everyone attacked a recent release of insurgents from the Abu Ghraib prison that had been meant as a goodwill gesture. They argued that it could only worsen the security situation. Then Iraqis made demands on the Americans for more development projects. One notable said that if the Americans promised more aid, the Iraqis would be happy to vote on December 15. The money available for aid, however, had shrunk significantly when the 101st Airborne Division had left this part of Iraq in 2004 and been replaced by a Stryker brigade. This, in turn, was part of a bigger story: the lack of continuity in assistance when one unit replaced another. For the Department of Defense, Iraq was a grand conception never properly worked out in detail.

In the third round, one Iraqi official accused another of pocketing development money, and said that the real problem was corruption. Local television put it on the record. So much for the lack of candor. When another dispute arose, about a missing \$10,000, Colonel Norris interrupted. "I observe three people with three different understandings of what happened to the money," he said. "We will put them in a room to achieve one understanding. We will work this out, and then we will move on." He flashed a steely smile.

Building on the conference in Nimrud was the first-ever regional "targeting meeting," held the following day at the TOC. Under 4-23's supervision, Iraqi army officers and police detectives from throughout the area were brought together to exchange the latest information on particular suspects. Decisions were made about whom to ignore and whom to apprehend (or try to kill). Two of the translators working for the Americans wore masks, because they mistrusted some of the Iraqi officials who were present.

There were reports of "Elvis sightings"—that is, local sightings of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (or "AMZ," in military lingo), the leader of the insurgent group called "al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia." One intriguing thing about some of the reports, though: Zarqawi, a master of disguise, was not always in disguise. He still had the same clipped beard, and was at times viewed easily inside a vehicle. He was brazen, confident—suicidal, perhaps, or simply disdainful of the Americans' ability to catch him. The challenge wasn't so much sighting him as enabling informants to communicate



when I saw them going behind the backs of new democratic governing councils to make deals with the tribal sheikhs.

Too, it was a matter of personalities and local situations, in which no guidance from books or from generalized policy discussions could help. Norris and others in the 172nd Stryker Brigade had made the call to temporarily favor Chief Salim based primarily on a reading of his character: thuggish, but capable and trustworthy. It was a reading backed up by Hamman-al-Alil's Mayor Khalif. This had nothing to do with giving too much power to middle-level officers. Rather, it was about trusting the experts on the ground—something Foreign Service officers had been recommending for decades. The same principle could apply to the military.

Mayor Khalif, Mayor Isa, Chief Salim, and others all gathered at a regional security meeting in Nimrud, held at a fifth-century Syrian Catholic monastery. Norris, wearing pixilated cammies and a Mohawk-style buzz cut, sat on a boxy red sofa between the two mayors. He opened the meeting by speaking for a minute or two about how honored he was to be present, how he believed in a free and democratic Iraq, and how the American military wanted nothing more than to help the Iraqi people achieve this. Power and authority flowed from him not merely because of his uniform but because he appeared to believe the things he said, without

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the information in real time and reacting fast enough to the intelligence.

In a number of the cases discussed, the insurgency was a family business: a father, son, and uncle formed the core of a cell that also had a record of small-time criminal activity. The most interesting new suspect was a female suicide bomber, who would act soon if she wasn't apprehended first. She was the young, stylish second wife of Abu Zubayr, the insurgent leader killed by the previous Stryker brigade. Because the police chief of Hamman-al-Alil had provided some of the intelligence leading to Abu Zubayr's death, it was thought that Hamman-al-Alil would be her target. "I'll have a photo of her in a few days," one of the Iraqi detectives promised.

This particular detective was very aggressive and always coming up with tips that panned out. Later, he would meet privately with the members of the battalion to provide more detailed information about things covered in a general way during the meeting. Norris wanted to encourage cooperation among the Iraqis, but he wasn't a fool—he simply didn't trust some of the people in the room. Moving forward in a straight line would be not progress but foolishness.

Another lesson of the meeting was that when you squash a network, you rarely kill it: elements of it disperse and are able to regroup at a lower level of activity. Progress rarely meant complete victory, but rather moderate suppression.

The next day, I went out on a seven-hour patrol with a three-vehicle platoon from Apache Company (Company A). Except for our getting shot at by someone with an automatic weapon, and catching someone else selling bootleg gasoline (perhaps in support of the insurgency), there were no dramatic incidents. A long line of cars waiting to be searched at the eastern entrance to the city showed that the Iraqi army was doing its job. "Outstanding," said a lieutenant. Inside the Stryker vehicle, a specialist read a Louis L'Amour novel. The dullness of the day was a positive sign.

The platoon undertook a foot patrol with an Iraqi army counterpart. You could not but be impressed with these Iraqi troops. Their TOC was as neat and well organized as 4-23's, with flow charts on the walls and satellite maps under table glass. They had strong-looking noncoms with game faces who flooded out of their white pickups and covered corners and fields of fire almost as well as the Americans.

There was only one problem: these troops were all ethnic Kurds, who at their headquarters had pictures of the Kurdish leader, Massoud Barzani. Would this unit stay loyal to something called "Iraq" in the event of a weakening of the state following an American drawdown? Or were the Americans merely helping along the possibility of what some called "creeping Kurdistan"? And was the possibility of a creeping Kurdistan actually a means of pressuring Sunni Arabs to constructively participate in the political process?

I was surprised to learn that this Iraqi army platoon was rated near the bottom by American military training teams

in terms of its fighting capability. When I asked for an explanation, I was told that the unit was bureaucratically underdeveloped at the battalion level. Although fighting well as a platoon was more important than "battalion ops" (because counterinsurgency was about small-unit warfare and developing informants), no nationwide unity of military effort was possible without organized battalions and divisions. If this unit was a bad one, the Iraqi army, at least in terms of professional development, was doing a lot better than many supposed—or so I thought. Later, though, I heard of another platoon whose soldiers stole from the places they searched and, as one American captain told me, "shit in the side rooms."

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everyone praised everyone else.
In the second round, everyone criticized
a "goodwill" release of insurgents.
In the third round, accusations flew.

A Sunni Arab shopkeeper said to me: "When American troops patrol the streets with the Iraqi army, it is so awful and humiliating for us, because we know those Iraqi soldiers are really Kurds. Your occupation has strengthened our enemies." This young man, the son of a former general in Saddam Hussein's army, engaged me in conversation for more than half an hour. I liked him. He turned out to be uncannily objective in his own way. He had just come back from Syria, upon which he heaped praise. "Syria now is so much better than Iraq," he said. "It is under tight control, so people there feel safe and can go about their lives with dignity. You Americans think you have brought freedom; you have just allowed the thugs from the villages to kill and rob from the educated people whom Saddam had protected."

"Your father liked Saddam?" I probed.

"My father hated Saddam," he replied. "He spit on him—in the home, that is. As long as you obeyed the rules by not criticizing the regime outside of your home, you were fine. With Saddam, there were clear rules; now there are none. Now we are caught between the Americans and the insurgents. Everybody hates terrorism, but we're more vulnerable than you."

"Should the Americans leave?" I asked.

"No," he said. "That would only make things worse." He told me that he was impressed with the American military, as long as it was alone and not with the Iraqi army. But he admitted that the Iraqi police had improved, and that Mosul was no longer the battle zone it had been the year before. "Your soldiers are disciplined. They don't scare people by shooting their guns in the air, like ours."

"But that discipline," I argued, "is an indirect effect of a free society, which allows the military to constantly criticize itself."

"No, no," he said. "What good is voting if the Shiites and Kurds will vote, too? Elections are useless without water, sewage, electricity, and safety."

"So you won't vote on December 15?"

"Maybe I will vote. What else is there to do?"

He was a mass of understandable contradictions.

More confusing was that another shopkeeper recommended the opposite: that U.S. soldiers should always patrol with the Iraqi army. If you applied every recommendation you got talking to Iraqis on just one street, you'd wind up doing exactly what you were doing before.

When an infantryman on patrol encountered Iraqi civilians, the best thing he could do was take off his sunglasses and his helmet too, if possible, look people directly in the eye, give them a lot of deference (especially if they were older), ask them for advice, here and there interject an opinion so as to actively engage them, and plead his case without trying to lecture. That was the only way to build trust among a population that was taught for centuries how to be subjects rather than citizens.

But it is simply impossible for the soldiers to be wholly liked. There is no nice way to barge into people's houses, bristling with weapons, stomping your dusty boots on their Oriental rugs, and expect it to be a pleasant experience for them, even if you hand out candy to their kids and replace a lock you had to break with a new one. On most such occasions, only a woman and her children were present. The soldiers would find an assault weapon that had recently been fired and its magazine of 7.62mm bullets half empty: very suspicious. Did the woman know anything about it? No, she would tell the Americans, peering out below her kerchief, staring past them at the wall.

Great numbers of such seemingly ineffectual searches did work, to the extent that they kept terrorists on the run (or at least inconvenienced), forcing the insurgents to hide their guns and bomb-making paraphernalia outside their homes. But it was an inefficient way to make progress, and it bred hostility. *If this keeps up*, I thought, *the Americans will end up being as hated in Iraq as the Israelis are in the West Bank. But it will be worse for the Americans, because they will be hated even as they are not feared.*

The U.S. military was attempting to plug a dike holding back an ocean of potential unrest, and was deeply handicapped by the fact that it had no visible large-scale public-works projects to soak up crime and mass unemployment. Only such projects could show Sunni Arabs—politically weaker than ever in Iraq—the tangible benefits of democracy. Indeed, as I went out on at least one patrol a day for three weeks, riding air guard, my upper body sticking out of the top of the Stryker, the typical scenery was of bullet-marked and half-finished buildings, gray and rust-colored, a shot-to-hell cityscape in which every object—sign, streetlight, telephone pole—was bent or broken. Garbage filled every available lot. The only bustling commerce I saw, in the markets near the old city, was of the subsistence kind that does not create employment.

One local police chief told me that there were now Iraqi police and soldiers on streets where six months before there had been none, and that murders and kidnappings had been reduced substantially. Security was as good as it was going to get without a major jobs program, I thought.

"That's why I like Iraq: it's always a challenge," said Lieutenant John Turner of Indianapolis, whom I accompanied on a patrol in Mosul. A big, fair-complexioned soldier with blond hair, Turner looked like a simple farm boy until you heard him speak with Iraqis. He talked about the promise of America, and about how he and his two sisters had grandparents who hadn't finished high school, and yet he and both his sisters had graduated from college, one from the Air Force Academy and he from Purdue.

"Sir, I am willing to die for a country that is not my own," he told a former *mukhtar*, a local official, in one Mosul neighborhood, firmly but quietly. We were drinking tea with the onetime official in his home, sitting on machine-made carpets, leaning on bare cinder-block walls. "So will you

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"Should the Americans leave?" I asked.

"No," he said. "That would only make things worse."

resume your position as *mukhtar*?" Turner asked. "Brave men must stand forward. Iraq's wealth is not oil but its civilization. Trust me by the projects I bring, not by my words. Will you stand with me against the insurgents? The men who threatened you are just sixteen-year-old boys with guns but no jobs. These projects will bring jobs to your streets."

The former *mukhtar* seemed to like the American lieutenant. But he said no. "I cannot resume my role as *mukhtar*," he said. "They will kill me. The contractor down the street was threatened if he continued to repair the neighborhood. If you are so serious about security, then why did you Americans release prisoners from Abu Ghraib?"

Many of the detainees that had lately been released from Abu Ghraib were known to be hardened criminals from the Mosul area, and the release had undermined the credibility of American troops here. Turner replied that the decision was one taken by Iraq's own new government. The former *mukhtar* wasn't convinced. For Iraqis meeting with Americans in Mosul, the name "Abu Ghraib" had a different connotation than it did in the United States. Here it meant not brutality but American weakness and lack of resolve.

I thought of a conversation I'd had the previous summer in Algeria, while embedded with Green Berets who were training alongside an Algerian special-forces company. I asked one of the Algerians how his government had put down its Islamic insurgency in the 1990s. The Algerian

insurgents had been arguably more brutal than those in Iraq, beheading bus passengers at roadblocks on a regular basis, making Algeria one of the most dangerous places in the world. Then the killing stopped, and the country promptly faded out of the world news, seemingly without explanation. The Algerian officer told me that suppression of the insurgents had been a simple military success story. Government forces, with the full support of a population devastated by constant terrorism—the psychological equivalent in Algeria of a 9/11 every week—had killed a lot of people (a portion of them innocent, I suspected), with no journalists in the vicinity to raise unwelcome questions. This was followed by internationally monitored elections and a steady trickle of European investors back to Algiers. The country was back on its feet. The United States, though it desired the same end result in Iraq, could not, would not, and should not apply the same means—or anything close to them. In Iraq, success would have to be accomplished through the most restricted of half-measures.

The former *mukhtar* told Lieutenant Turner not to return, because he was afraid for his life. The tribe could protect the former *mukhtar* in the countryside, but not in the city. Turner pleaded further, probing what specific security and political actions could get the man to change his mind. Finally, the old sheikh said: “If the elections go well, everything will be better afterwards. We will see then.”

Turner departed, saying, “I will be back. I will not quit.” The afternoon hadn’t been altogether wasted. Just getting anyone in the area to tell the platoon where the former *mukhtar* lived had taken three months of pleading, and after several false leads that day, the soldiers had found him.

The patrol wasn’t over. After dark, we went house to house in another neighborhood from which mortars had been fired at a new Iraqi police station. In the fifth house, someone finally cooperated and supplied information about the make of the car, the men inside it, and where they had set up the mortar. The next step would be to deploy snipers there for several days running, hoping to eliminate the culprits when they returned. If that happened, the people in the other four houses might start cooperating. “I hate to say it,” said Turner, “but sometimes the best confidence-building measure is to kill certain people.” Another thing you could do was to pay people significantly for tips that turned out to be accurate. None of this was new, or noble. But these young soldiers were learning by trial and error that such tactics worked, assuming you had a lot of patience. It was like the old clichés about watching the grass grow, or the paint dry. “The media says there’s no strategy to win this war,” Turner observed. “There is; we’re doing it. But it’s slow, and it doesn’t make headlines like Abu Ghraib.”

The Blackhawk helicopter flight south to the Qayyarah-West Forward Operating Base took fifteen minutes and was marked by small-arms fire, directed at the helicopter and answered by one of the side gunners with a short burst. Upon landing, I signed in with the 4th Battalion of the 11th Field Artillery Regiment, another part of the 172nd Stryker Brigade. My first destination with the soldiers of 4-11 “Arctic Thunder” was the town of Om al-Mahir, an area under the command of thirty-one-year-old Captain Jeff Ferguson of Columbus, Mississippi. In the town, con-



struction projects were everywhere, along with brand-new plastic café chairs and satellite dishes. Crowds of children gave the Americans the thumbs-up symbol. Streets were cleaner than in Mosul, owing to a trash-removal program, started by Ferguson, that employed some of the area’s teenagers. Scattered Iraqi army and police roadblocks gave a sense of safety. The searches at these roadblocks were not necessarily arbitrary. Because Saddam had provided certain types of cars to certain areas, some strangers announced themselves merely by the make of their car.

At Om al-Mahir, on a patch of grass amid faded oleanders, a few American soldiers and a large crowd of tribal elders and young men and boys sprawled over Oriental rugs for what the troops called a “goat grab”—grilled meat on a bed of unleavened bread, a meal that you ate with your hands. Iraqi soldiers stood watch along the perimeter and Iraqi General Ali Attalah Malloh al-Jabouri, the commander of one of the battalions under 4-11’s tutelage, spoke to the gathering. The Americans had left their helmets and body armor in their Humvees a few hundred yards away, and their weapons against a wall, entrusting their safety to the Iraqi soldiers.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE U.S. ARMY/SGT. JEREMIAH JOHNSON

"The hands of men who are without work will end up cooperating with the devil," said General Ali, addressing the Americans and Captain Ferguson in particular. He followed with details of this young man and that one who were unemployed, and who had drifted north to Mosul to take part in the insurgency. He was working up to a familiar theme.

"Where is the investment money, now that our area has been safe for months?" The American soldiers had no answer. They were as frustrated as the Iraqis. Even the safe areas

On a landscape flattened by anarchy, the United States has constructed a house of cards. Fortifying it will require aid that the U.S. military cannot provide.

showed no sign of civilian relief work or major rebuilding other than what I had seen en route. The soldiers admitted that while they had the money to lay gravel on a particular road, they lacked the funds to pave it, even though all agreed that graveled roads offered easy concealment for IEDs.

It was surreal. The stability of Iraq will likely determine history's judgment on President George W. Bush. And yet even in a newly secured area like this one, the administration has provided little money for the one factor essential to that stability: jobs. On a landscape flattened by anarchy in 2004, the American military has constructed a house of cards. Fortifying this fragile structure with wood and cement now will require more aid—in massive amounts, and of a type that even America's increasingly civil affairs-oriented military cannot provide. This house of cards, flimsy as it is, constitutes a substantial achievement. But because Washington's deeds do not match its rhetoric, even this fragile achievement might go for naught.

That night I accompanied 4-11's battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Scott Wuestner of Philadelphia—and a former tight end on the West Point football team—to the home of another sheikh. The town that this sheikh controlled had recently become unfriendly, with fewer cheers from the kids and an increasing number of "stink stares" from the grown-ups whenever American soldiers passed by. The sheikh had prepared an extravagant dinner for us. He smilingly denied that anyone he knew had become unfriendly. Then he excused himself for a moment, and one of his subordinates casually mentioned to Wuestner that people were becoming impatient. They wanted loans for a cotton gin, they wanted chicken farms, and so forth, yet nothing was happening. Wuestner wrote it all down in one of those green-cloth-covered field books that American soldiers and Marines carry, but said he wasn't sure he could find the money. The Bush administration's "National Strategy for Victory in Iraq," released with great fanfare in November, was merely a document; the difficulty of finding ground-level money for necessary projects was, in contrast, quite real.

"We can race around the battlefield and fix little problems," one Army major complained to me, "but where is the State Department and USAID to solve the big problems?" Whereas commentators in Washington tend to blame the machinations of Donald Rumsfeld's Pentagon for keeping the State Department out of Iraq, all of the mid-level military officers I spoke with—each of whom desperately wanted to see civilian aid and reconstruction workers here—said that if the State Department got the requisite funding, it could be as bureaucratically dynamic as their own battalions, and infrastructure-rebuilding would not be where it appeared to be: at the zero point.

Meanwhile, the battalion commanders could only encourage Iraqis to seek help from their own barely functioning government ministries. The Americans sought genuinely to transfer power and responsibility to the Iraqis. But history has taught the Iraqis to think of power not in any formal or legalistic sense but crudely, in terms of who actually wields the authority to help and the power to punish severely.

Yet the American military might still do more, I thought. For example, I hadn't noticed the Army carrying out a Medical Civic Action Program for the local population, as I had seen it do in Mongolia, the Philippines, Kenya, Djibouti, and other places. No activity develops relationships (and hence intelligence assets) like treating people for disease and illness.

But as long as the U.S. military was still, to all intents and purposes, trying to save Iraq all by itself, staving off anarchy would mean, essentially, *drinking a lot of chai*—that is, thinking of any excuse to get out of your base to meet and talk with the locals. To wit, Wuestner, a conventional artillery officer, told me of a meal he had eaten with thirteen *mukhtars*. "When everyone lined up to wash their hands," he said, "I gave them the towel," a gesture of extreme politeness in Iraqi culture. As necessary and important as killing insurgents is, establishing relationships is more important still.

Soldiers can't possibly stabilize such a country except by getting outside the base perimeter, but it is doubtful that more than one in ten ever venture out. Of the 135,000 or so American troops serving in Iraq today, only a very small fraction have dealt with Iraqis in any substantial way.

Back in Mosul, I had lunch in the massive chow hall with Captain Brad Velotta of Alexandria, Louisiana. We figured that with all the support troops and private contractors who kept this base running, its total population was roughly 3,000. Out of this group, on any given day, no more than about 200 troops and civilian operatives ventured into Mosul. The visible results of all this support were amenities like heating and the Internet—plus crab, lobster, steak, and ice cream in the chow hall. Velotta, the commander of one of the battalion's three rifle companies, took no satisfaction from that. His whole purpose in Iraq was to be constantly away from his FOB, "outside the wire" and among Iraqis. He spoke about the Marine detachments sent to fight near the Syrian border. They slept in the dirt, and their force protection consisted of just themselves, fanning out into a

360-degree formation at night. “Zero support tail,” in other words. No ice cream. No Internet.

Of course, that assessment, he quickly admitted, wasn’t wholly fair, since the Marines relied on fuel, ammo, equipment, and food that came from large bases like this one. But it did capture a truth: that there might be some leeway to reduce the American presence in Iraq without proportionately undermining the war effort. The need for crab, lobster, steak, and ice cream—the comforts of home—was part of an occupation mentality, as seen in West Germany during the Cold War. But the situation in Iraq, Velotta said, required a fighting mentality. Sparser bases would mean more people outside the perimeter, because the very comforts inside the base subtly reduce a commander’s incentive to take troops outside for too long. There was an undeniable contradiction between the high living standard the Army felt it had to provide for the sake of soldiers’ morale and the new warrior ethos it was trying to promote. When I was staying with the Marines in the Sunni Triangle and in sub-Saharan Africa in the spring and summer of 2004, living substantially on MREs, I learned that the worse the conditions, the better the mood of the troops. In the field, at least in the short term, troops live for the moment; at the base, eating good chow, they count the days.

The Army thought differently, though. It planned to reduce troop strength by consolidating FOBs into “super-FOBs,” to reduce its duplication of support services, even while maintaining the same high living standards. In an atmospheric sense, then, these enlarged FOBs would soon resemble the vast, Little America “Burger King bases” in Europe and Turkey. At the same time, by turning over command of various regions to Iraqi forces, the Army planned to reduce the American footprint and wean the Iraqis off American support.

In one sense, the Army was right. There aren’t any great logistical efficiencies out there. You couldn’t substantially reduce the total number of American troops in Iraq without also reducing the number who went outside the base perimeters. While you could save on support troops here and there with enlarged FOBs, most of the logistical element of the occupation was, in fact, already being handled by civilian contractors. The American face in Iraq in the early twenty-first century was as much the rough-and-tumble Kellogg, Brown & Root employee as the American soldier. It was KBR that provided items like lobster and ice cream, not some imagined long support tail of men and women in greenish cammies. Because so much had already been outsourced, it was hard to reduce the support tail that did exist without also undermining fighting elements like the Stryker brigade.

Thus, as my days in Iraq multiplied, I became increasingly leery of anything but the most gradual and calibrated of troop drawdowns. Our job was still not finished in Iraq—not by a long shot.

While the colonels I met were confident that the Iraqi army and police could bear the burden given to them in a reduction of American forces, the staff sergeants and other noncoms working every day with the new Iraqi security elements were not. “Trust me, sir,” one staff sergeant confided about an Iraqi

army unit with which his platoon had just completed a three-hour patrol, “if we leave, they won’t show up again in this neighborhood. They’ll never leave their base.” On another occasion, while surveying a school slated to be a polling station, the local Iraqi army commander kept demanding that his men be able to camp out at the school overnight. The American captain kept telling him “no.” One of the noncoms quietly remarked, “It’s the same old story: all they want to do is hunker down and play defense, but they will not be able to hold off this insurgency unless they play offense.” As for the Iraqi police, the noncoms expressed even less confidence.

Ultimately, one could anticipate a colonial-type situation that would never be referred to as such by name, in which maybe 10,000 American troops remained in Iraq, embedded in various ministries and throughout the military and police, propping up the security structure behind the scenes. It would be much like the arrangement in the Philippines in the early twentieth century, after the American invasion and our protracted counterinsurgency campaign there. Today, if you were to visit any number of places in the Balkans or the Caucasus, you would find quite a few American military officers working in this and that defense ministry or army unit, all very low-key, so that it never becomes a political issue. Iraq could one day become a much larger version of that principle. But things are not close to that point yet.

A final impression of Iraq: one day I had gone with a group of American soldiers to the sprawling ruins of Hatra, a city that was founded after the fall of Nineveh, at the end of the seventh century B.C., and reached its peak in the second and third centuries A.D. Hatra lay in the desert southwest of Mosul, empty of other visitors, without even a guardrail or derelict ticket stand, as though awaiting rediscovery by some Victorian-era explorers. Indeed, the only sign of the twentieth century were the initials of Saddam Hussein, carved into bricks throughout the complex and looking like the marks of just one more tyrant from antiquity.

Hatra had flourished as a Silk Road nexus of trade and ideas; its mix of Assyrian, Hellenistic, Parthian, and Roman styles set the stage for early Islamic architecture. The ruins encouraged me to think that Iraq’s best available future was as a similar east-west crossroads, in a Middle East of weak, decentralized states—states that would replace the tyrannical perversions of the modern nation-state that now exist, and are crumbling. In decades ahead, cities like Mosul and Aleppo would be oriented, as they were in the past, as much toward each other and toward cities in Turkey and Iran as toward their respective capitals of Baghdad and Damascus. Borders would obviously matter less, as old caravan routes flourished in different form. Something comparable has already begun in the Balkans, a far more developed part of the Ottoman Empire than Mesopotamia. In Mesopotamia, this transition would be longer, costlier, and messier. We are in for a very long haul. Except for the collapse of Turkey’s empire, the creation of the state of Israel, and the Iranian revolution, nothing and nobody in a century has so jolted the Middle East as has George W. Bush. ■

THE DRUG PUSHERS

As America turns its health-care system over to the market, pharmaceutical reps are wielding more and more influence—and the line between them and doctors is beginning to blur

BY CARL ELLIOTT

Illustrations by Marcellus Hall

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Back in the old days, long before drug companies started making headlines in the business pages, doctors were routinely called upon by company representatives known as “detail men.” To “detail” a doctor is to give that doctor information about a company’s new drugs, with the aim of persuading the doctor to prescribe them. When I was growing up, in South Carolina in the 1970s, I would occasionally see detail men sitting patiently in the waiting room outside the office of my father, a family doctor. They were pretty easy to spot. Detail men were usually sober, conservatively dressed gentlemen who would not have looked out of place at the Presbyterian church across the street. Instead of Bibles or hymn books, though, they carried detail bags, which were filled with journal articles, drug samples, and branded knickknacks for the office.

Today detail men are officially known as “pharmaceutical sales representatives,” but everyone I know calls them “drug reps.” Drug reps are still easy to spot in a clinic or hospital, but for slightly different reasons. The most obvious is their appearance. It is probably fair to say that doctors, pharmacists, and medical-school professors are not generally admired for their good looks and fashion sense. Against this backdrop, the average drug rep looks like a supermodel, or maybe an A-list movie star. Drug reps today are often young, well groomed, and strikingly good-looking. Many are women. They are usually affable and sometimes very smart. Many give off a kind of glow, as if they had just emerged from a spa or salon. And they are always, hands down, the best-dressed people in the hospital.

Drug reps have been calling on doctors since the mid-nineteenth century, but during the past decade or so their numbers have increased dramatically. From 1996 to 2001 the pharmaceutical sales force in America doubled, to a total of 90,000 reps. One reason is simple: good reps move product. Detailing is expensive, but almost all practicing doctors see reps at least occasionally, and many doctors say they find reps useful. One study found that for drugs introduced after 1997 with revenues exceeding

\$200 million a year, the average return for each dollar spent on detailing was \$10.29. That is an impressive figure. It is almost twice the return on investment in medical-journal advertising, and more than seven times the return on direct-to-consumer advertising.

But the relationship between doctors and drug reps has never been uncomplicated, for reasons that should be obvious. The first duty of doctors, at least in theory, is to their patients. Doctors must make prescribing decisions based on medical evidence and their own clinical judgment. Drug reps, in contrast, are salespeople. They swear no oaths, take care of no patients, and profess no high-minded ethical duties. Their job is to persuade doctors to prescribe their drugs. If reps are lucky, their drugs are good, the studies are clear, and their job is easy. But sometimes reps must persuade doctors to prescribe drugs that are marginally effective, exorbitantly expensive, difficult to administer, or even dangerously toxic. Reps that succeed are rewarded with bonuses or commissions. Reps that fail may find themselves unemployed.

Most people who work in health care, if they give drug reps any thought at all, regard them with mixed feelings. A handful avoid reps as if they were vampires, backing out of the room when they see one approaching. In their view, the best that can be said about reps is that they are a necessary by-product of a market economy. They view reps much as NBA players used to view Michael Jordan: as an awesome, powerful force that you can never really stop, only hope to control.

Yet many reps are so friendly, so easygoing, so much fun to flirt with that it is virtually impossible to demonize them. How can you demonize someone who brings you lunch and touches your arm and remembers your birthday and knows

the names of all your children? After awhile even the most steel-willed doctors may look forward to visits by a rep, if only in the self-interested way that they look forward to the UPS truck pulling up in their driveway. A rep at the door means a delivery has arrived: take-out for the staff, trinkets for the kids, and, most indispensably, drug samples on the house. Although samples are the single

Carl Elliott teaches at the Center for Bioethics at the University of Minnesota and is the author of several books, including Better Than Well: American Medicine Meets the American Dream (2003), and the co-editor of The Last Physician: Walker Percy and the Moral Life of Medicine (1999). His article "A New Way to Be Mad" appeared in the December 2000 issue of The Atlantic.



largest marketing expense for the drug industry, they pay handsome dividends: doctors who accept samples of a drug are far more likely to prescribe that drug later on.

Drug reps may well have more influence on prescriptions than anyone in America other than doctors themselves, but to most people outside the drug industry their jobs are mysterious. What exactly do they do every day? Where do they get their information? What do they say about doctors when the doctors are not around? Reps can be found in hospitals, waiting rooms, and conference halls all over the country, yet they barely register on the collective medical consciousness. Many doctors notice them only in the casual, utilitarian way that one might notice a waitress or a bartender. Some doctors look down on them on ethical grounds. "Little Willy Lomans," they say, "only in it for the money." When I asked my friends and colleagues in medicine to suggest some reps I could talk to about detailing, most could not come up with a single name.

These doctors may be right about reps. It is true that selling pharmaceuticals can be a highly lucrative job. But in a market-based medical system, are reps really so different from doctors? Most doctors in the United States now work, directly or indirectly, for large corporations. Like reps, many doctors must answer to managers and bureaucrats. They are overwhelmed by paperwork and red tape. Unlike my father, who would have sooner walked to Charleston barefoot than take out an ad for his practice, many doctors now tout their services on roadside billboards. My medical-school alumni

magazine recently featured the Class of 1988 valedictorian, who has written a diet book, started her own consulting firm, and become the national spokesperson for a restaurant chain. For better or worse, America has turned its health-care system over to the same market forces that transformed the village hardware store into Home Depot and the corner pharmacy into a strip-mall CVS. Its doctors are moving to the same medical suburb where drug reps have lived for the past 150 years. If they want to know what life is like there, perhaps they should talk to their neighbors.

THE KING OF HAPPY HOUR

Gene Carbona was almost a criminal. I know this because, thirty minutes into our first telephone conversation, he told me, "Carl, I was almost a criminal." I have heard ex-drug reps speak bluntly about their former jobs, but never quite so cheerfully and openly. These days Carbona works for *The Medical Letter*, a highly respected non-profit publication (Carbona stresses that he is speaking only for himself), but he was telling me about his twelve years working for Merck and then Astra Merck, a firm initially set up to market the Sweden-based Astra's drugs in the United States. Carbona began training as a rep in 1988, when he was only eleven days out of college. He detailed two drugs for Astra Merck. One was a calcium-channel blocker he calls "a dog." The other was the heartburn medication Prilosec, which at the time was available by prescription only.

Prilosec is the kind of drug most reps can only dream about. The industry usually considers a drug to be a blockbuster if it reaches a billion dollars a year in sales. In 1998 Prilosec became the first drug in America to reach \$5 billion a year. In 2000 it made \$6 billion. Prilosec's success was not the result of a massive heartburn epidemic. It was based on the same principle that drove the success of many other 1990s blockbusters, from Vioxx to Viagra: the restoration of an ordinary biological function that time and circumstance had eroded. In the case of Prilosec, the function was digestion. Many people discovered that the drug allowed them to eat the burritos and curries that their gastrointestinal systems had placed off-limits. So what if Prilosec was \$4 a pill, compared with a quarter or so for a Tagamet? Patients still begged for it. Prilosec was their savior. Astra Merck marketed Prilosec as the "purple pill," but, according to Carbona, many patients called it "purple Jesus."

How did Astra Merck do it? Prilosec was the first proton pump inhibitor (a drug that inhibits the production of stomach acid) approved by the Food and Drug Administration, and thus the first drug available in its class. By definition this gave it a considerable head start on the competition. In the

be on the house. "My money was no good at restaurants," he told me, "because I was the King of Happy Hour."

My favorite Carbona story, the one that left me shaking my head in admiration, took place in Tallahassee. One of the more important clinics Carbona called on was a practice there consisting of about fifty doctors. Although the practice had plenty of patients, it was struggling. This problem was not uncommon. When the movement toward corporate-style medicine got under way, in the 1980s and 1990s, many doctors found themselves ill-equipped to run a business; they didn't know much about how to actually make money. ("That's why doctors are such great targets for Ponzi schemes and real-estate scams," Carbona helpfully points out.) Carbona was detailing this practice twice a week and had gotten to know some of the clinicians pretty well. At one point a group of them asked him for help. "Gene, you work for a successful business," Carbona recalls them saying. "Is there any advice you could give us to help us turn the practice around?" At this point he knew he had stumbled upon an extraordinary opportunity.

Carbona decided that the clinic needed a "practice-management consultant." And he and his colleagues at Astra Merck knew just the man: a financial planner and accountant

Drug reps are easy to spot in a hospital or clinic. They are often young and strikingly good-looking. They are usually affable and sometimes very smart. And they are always, hands down, the best-dressed people in the hospital.

late 1990s Astra Merck mounted a huge direct-to-consumer campaign; ads for the purple pill were ubiquitous. But consumer advertising can do only so much for a drug, because doctors, not patients, write the prescriptions. This is where reps become indispensable.

Many reps can tell stories about occasions when, in order to move their product, they pushed the envelope of what is ethically permissible. I have heard reps talk about scoring sports tickets for their favorite doctors, buying televisions for waiting rooms, and arranging junkets to tropical resorts. One rep told me he set up a putting green in a hospital and gave a putter to any doctor who made a hole-in-one. A former rep told me about a colleague who somehow managed to persuade a pharmacist to let him secretly write the prescribing protocol for antibiotic use at a local hospital.

But Carbona was in a class of his own. He had access to so much money for doctors that he had trouble spending it all. He took residents out to bars. He distributed "unrestricted educational grants." He arranged to buy lunch for the staff of certain private practices every day for a year. Often he would invite a group of doctors and their guests to a high-end restaurant, buy them drinks and a lavish meal, open up the club in back, and party until 4:00 a.m. "The more money I spent," Carbona says, "the more money I made." If he came back to the restaurant later that week with his wife, everything would

with whom they were very friendly. They wrote up a contract. They agreed to pay the consultant a flat fee of about \$50,000 to advise the clinic. But they also gave him another incentive. Carbona says, "We told him that if he was successful there would be more business for him in the future, and by 'successful,' we meant a rise in prescriptions for our drugs."

The consultant did an extremely thorough job. He spent eleven or twelve hours a day at the clinic for months. He talked to every employee, from the secretaries to the nurses to the doctors. He thought carefully about every aspect of the practice, from the most mundane administrative details to big-picture matters such as bill collection and financial strategy. He turned the practice into a profitable, smoothly running financial machine. And prescriptions for Astra Merck drugs soared.

When I asked Carbona how the consultant had increased Astra Merck's market share within the clinic so dramatically, he said that the consultant never pressed the doctors directly. Instead, he talked up Carbona. "Gene has put his neck on the line for you guys," he would tell them. "If this thing doesn't work, he might get fired." The consultant emphasized what a remarkable service the practice was getting, how valuable the financial advice was, how everything was going to turn around for them—all courtesy of Carbona. The strategy worked. "Those guys went



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berserk for me," Carbona says. Doctors at the newly vitalized practice prescribed so many Astra Merck drugs that he got a \$140,000 bonus. The scheme was so successful that Carbona and his colleagues at Astra Merck decided to duplicate it in other practices.

I got in touch with Carbona after I learned that he was giving talks on the American Medical Student Association lecture circuit about his experiences as a rep. At that point I had read a fair bit of pharmaceutical sales literature, and most of it had struck me as remarkably hokey and stilted. Merck's official training materials, for example, instruct reps to say things like, "Doctor, based on the information we discussed today, will you prescribe Vioxx for your patients who need once-daily power to prevent pain due to osteoarthritis?" So I was unprepared for a man with Carbona's charisma and forthright humor. I could see why he had been such an excellent rep: he came off as a cross between a genial con artist and a comedic character actor. After two hours on the phone with him I probably would have bought anything he was selling.

Most media accounts of the pharmaceutical industry miss this side of drug reps. By focusing on scandals—the kickbacks and the fraud and the lavish gifts—they lose sight of the fact that many reps are genuinely likeable people. The better ones have little use for the canned scripts they are taught in training. For them, effective selling is all about developing a relationship with a doctor. If a doctor likes a rep, that doctor is going to feel bad about refusing to see the rep, or about taking his lunches and samples but never prescribing his drugs. As Jordan Katz, a rep for Schering-Plough until two years ago, says, "A lot of doctors just write for who they like."

A variation on this idea emerges in *Side Effects*, Kathleen Slattery-Moschkau's 2005 film about a fictional fledgling drug rep. Slattery-Moschkau, who worked for nine years as a rep for Bristol-Myers Squibb and Johnson & Johnson, says the carefully rehearsed messages in the corporate training courses really got to her. "I hated the crap I had to say to doctors," she told me. The heroine of *Side Effects* eventually decides to ditch the canned messages and stop spinning her product. Instead, she is brutally honest. "Bottom line?" she says to one doctor. "Your patients won't shit for a week." To her amazement, she finds that the blunter she is, the higher her market share rises. Soon she is winning sales awards and driving a company BMW.

For most reps, market share is the yardstick of success. The more scripts their doctors write for their drugs, the more the reps make. Slattery-Moschkau says that most of her fellow reps made \$50,000 to \$90,000 a year in salary and another \$30,000 to \$50,000 in bonuses, depending on how much they sold. Reps are pressured to "make quota," or meet yearly sales targets, which often increase from year to year. Reps who fail to make quota must endure the indignity of having their district manager frequently accompany them on sales calls. Those who meet quota are rewarded handsomely. The most successful reps achieve minor celebrity within the company.

One perennial problem for reps is the doctor who simply refuses to see them at all. Reps call these doctors "No Sees." Cracking a No See is a genuine achievement, the pharmaceutical equivalent of a home run or a windmill dunk. Gene Carbona says that when he came across a No See, or any other doctor who was hard to influence, he used "Northeast-Southwest" tactics. If you can't get to a doctor, he explains, you go after the people surrounding that doctor, showering them with gifts. Carbona might help support a Little League baseball team or a bowling league. After awhile, the doctor would think, *Gene is doing such nice things for all these people, the least I can do is give him ten minutes of my time.* At that point, Carbona says, the sale was as good as made. "If you could get ten minutes with a doctor, your market share would go through the roof."

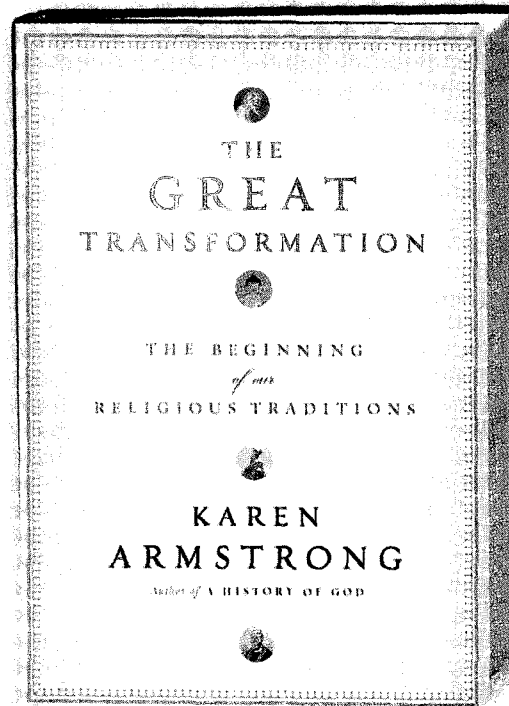
For decades the medical community has debated whether gifts and perks from reps have any real effect. Doctors insist that they do not. Studies in the medical literature indicate just the opposite. Doctors who take gifts from a company, studies show, are more likely to prescribe that company's drugs or ask that they be added to their hospital's formulary. The pharmaceutical industry has managed this debate skillfully, pouring vast resources into gifts for doctors while simultaneously reassuring them that their integrity prevents them from being influenced. For example, in a recent editorial in the journal *Health Affairs*, Bert Spilker, a vice president for PhRMA, the pharmaceutical trade group, defended the practice of gift-giving against critics who, he scornfully wrote, "fear that physicians are so weak and lacking in integrity that they would 'sell their souls' for a pack of M&M candies and a few sandwiches and doughnuts."

Doctors' belief in their own incorruptibility appears to be honestly held. It is rare to hear a doctor—even in private, off-the-record conversation—admit that industry gifts have made a difference in his or her prescribing. In fact, according to one small study of medical residents in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, one way to convince doctors that they cannot be influenced by gifts may be to give them one; the more gifts a doctor takes, the more likely that doctor is to believe that the gifts have had no effect. This helps explain why it makes sense for reps to give away even small gifts. A particular gift may have no influence, but it might make a doctor more apt to think that he or she would not be influenced by larger gifts in the future. A pizza and a penlight are like inoculations, tiny injections of self-confidence that make a doctor think, *I will never be corrupted by money.*

Gifts from the drug industry are nothing new, of course. William Helfand, who worked in marketing for Merck for thirty-three years, told me that company representatives were giving doctors books and pamphlets as early as the late nineteenth century. "There is nothing new under the sun," Helfand says. "There is just more of it." The question is: Why is there so much more of it just now? And what changed during the past decade to bring about such a dramatic increase in reps bearing gifts?

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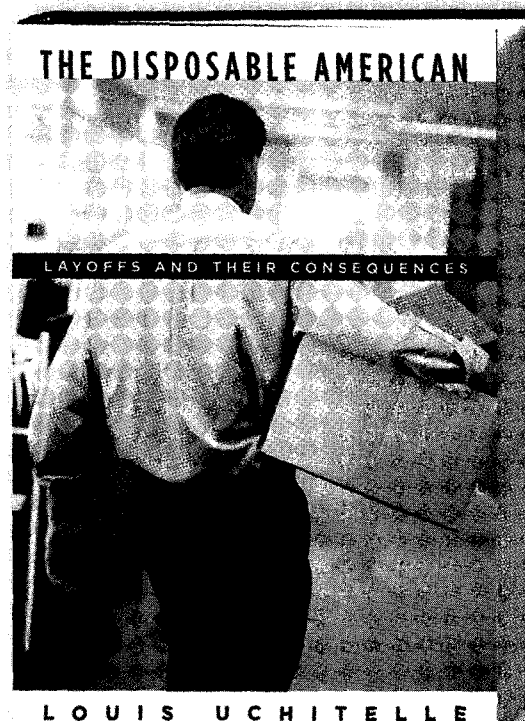
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AN ETHIC OF SALESMANSHIP

One morning last year I had breakfast at the Bryant-Lake Bowl, a diner in Minneapolis, with a former Pfizer rep named Michael Oldani. Oldani grew up in a working-class family in Kenosha, Wisconsin. Although he studied biochemistry in college, he knew nothing about pharmaceutical sales until he was recruited for Pfizer by the husband of a woman with whom he worked. Pfizer gave him a good salary, a company car, free gas, and an expense account. "It was kind of like the Mafia," Oldani told me. "They made me an offer I couldn't refuse." At the time, he was still in college and living with his parents. "I knew a good ticket out of Kenosha when I saw one," he says. He carried the bag for Pfizer for nine years, until 1998.

Today Oldani is a Princeton-trained medical anthropologist teaching at the University of Wisconsin at Whitewater. He wrote his doctoral dissertation on the anthropology of pharmaceutical sales, drawing not just on ethnographic fieldwork he did in Manitoba as a Fulbright scholar but also on his own experience as a rep. This dual perspective—the view of both a detached outsider and a street-savvy insider—gives his work authority and a critical edge. I had invited Oldani to lecture at our medical school, the University of

Many companies started hitting for the fences, concentrating on potential blockbuster drugs for chronic illnesses in huge populations: Claritin for allergies, Viagra for impotence, Vioxx for arthritis, Prozac for depression. Successful drugs were followed by a flurry of competing me-too drugs. For most of the 1990s and the early part of this decade, the pharmaceutical industry was easily the most profitable business sector in America. In 2002, according to Public Citizen, a nonprofit watchdog group, the combined profits of the top ten pharmaceutical companies in the Fortune 500 exceeded the combined profits of the other 490 companies.

During this period reps began to feel the influence of a new generation of executives intent on bringing market values to an industry that had been slow to embrace them. Anthony Wild, who was hired to lead Parke-Davis in the mid-1990s, told the journalist Greg Critser, the author of *Generation Rx*, that one of his first moves upon his appointment was to increase the incentive pay given to successful reps. Wild saw no reason to cap reps' incentives. As he said to the company's older executives, "Why not let them get rich?" Wild told the reps about the change at a meeting in San Francisco. "We announced that we were taking off the caps," he told Critser, "and the sales force went nuts!"

In the 1990s, new technology made it easy for any rep to track any doctor's prescriptions. The result was an arms race of pharmaceutical gift-giving. If GSK flew doctors to Palm Springs for a conference, you flew them to Paris.

Minnesota, after reading his work in anthropology journals. Although his writing is scholarly, his manner is modest and self-effacing, more Kenosha than Princeton. This is a man who knows his way around a diner.

Like Carbona, Oldani worked as a rep in the late 1980s and the 1990s, a period when the drug industry was undergoing key transformations. Its ethos was changing from that of the country-club establishment to the aggressive, new-money entrepreneur. Impressed by the success of AIDS activists in pushing for faster drug approvals, the drug industry increased pressure on the FDA to let companies bring drugs to the market more quickly. As a result, in 1992 Congress passed the Prescription Drug User Fee Act, under which drug companies pay a variety of fees to the FDA, with the aim of speeding up drug approval (thereby making the drug industry a major funder of the agency set up to regulate it). In 1997 the FDA dropped most restrictions on direct-to-consumer advertising of prescription drugs, opening the gate for the eventual Levitra ads on Super Bowl Sunday and Zoloft cartoons during daytime television shows. The drug industry also became a big political player in Washington: by 2005, according to the Center for Public Integrity, its lobbying organization had become the largest in the country.

It was not just the industry's ethos that was changing; the technology was changing, too. According to Oldani, one of the most critical changes came in the way that information was gathered. In the days before computers, reps had to do a lot of legwork to figure out whom they could influence. They had to schmooze with the receptionists, make friends with the nurses, and chat up the pharmacists in order to learn which drugs the local doctors were prescribing, using the right incentives to coax what they needed from these informants. "Pharmacists are like pigeons," Jamie Reidy, a former rep for Pfizer and Eli Lilly, told me. "Only instead of bread crumbs, you toss them pizzas and sticky notes."

But in the 1990s, new information technology made it much simpler to track prescriptions. Market-research firms began collecting script-related data from pharmacies and hospitals and selling it to pharmaceutical companies. The American Medical Association collaborated by licensing them information about doctors (including doctors who do not belong to the AMA), which it collects in its "Physician Masterfile." Soon reps could find out exactly how many prescriptions any doctor was writing and exactly which drugs those prescriptions were for. All they had to do was turn on their laptops and download the data.

What they discovered was revelatory. For one thing, they found that a lot of doctors were lying to them. Doctors might tell a rep that they were writing prescriptions for, say, Lipitor, when they weren't. They were just being polite, or saying whatever they thought would get the rep off their backs. Now reps could detect the deception immediately. (Even today many doctors do not realize that reps have access to script-tracking reports.)

More important, script-tracking helped reps figure out which doctors to target. They no longer had to waste time and money on doctors with conservative prescribing habits; they could head straight to the "high prescribers," or "high writers." And they could get direct feedback on which tactics were working. If a gift or a dinner presentation did not result in more scripts, they knew to try another approach.

But there was a rub: the data was available to every rep from every company. The result was an arms race of pharmaceutical gift-giving, in which reps were forced to devise ever-new ways to exert influence. If the Eli Lilly rep was bringing sandwiches to the office staff, you brought Thai food. If GSK flew doctors to Palm Springs for a conference, you flew them to Paris. Oldani used to take residents to Major League Baseball games. "We did beer bong, shots, and really partied," he told me. "Some of the guys were incredibly drunk on numerous occasions. I used to buy half barrels for their parties, almost on a retainer-like basis. I never talked product once to any of these residents, and they took care of me in their day-to-day practice. I never missed quota at their hospital."

Oldani says that script-tracking data also changed the way that reps thought about prescriptions. The old system of monitoring prescriptions was very inexact, and the relationship between a particular doctor's prescriptions and the work of a given rep was relatively hard to measure. But with precise script-tracking reports, reps started to feel a sense of ownership about prescriptions. If their doctors started writing more prescriptions for their drugs, the credit clearly belonged to them. However, more precise monitoring also invited micro-management by the reps' bosses. They began pressuring reps to concentrate on high prescribers, fill out more paperwork, and report more frequently back to management.

"Script-tracking, to me at least, made everyone a potentially successful rep," Oldani says. Reps didn't need to be nearly as resourceful and street savvy as in the past; they just needed the script-tracking reports. The industry began hiring more and more reps, many with backgrounds in sales (rather than, say, pharmacy, nursing, or biology). Some older



reps say that during this period the industry replaced the serious detail man with "Pharma Barbie" and "Pharma Ken," whose medical knowledge was exceeded by their looks and catering skills. A newer, regimented style of selling began to replace the improvisational, more personal style of the old-school reps. Whatever was left of an ethic of service gave way to an ethic of salesmanship.

Doctors were caught in a bind. Many found themselves being called on several times a week by different reps from the same company. Most continued to see reps, some because they felt obligated to get up to speed with new drugs, some because they wanted to keep the pipeline of free samples open. But seeing reps has a cost, of course: the more reps a doctor sees, the longer the patients sit in the waiting room. Many doctors began to feel as though they deserved whatever gifts and perks they could get because reps were such an irritation. At one time a few practices even charged reps a fee for visiting.

Professional organizations made some efforts to place limits on the gifts doctors were allowed to accept. But these efforts were halfhearted, and they met with opposition from indignant doctors ridiculing the idea that their judgment could be bought. One doctor, in a letter to the *American Medical News*, confessed, "Every time a discussion comes up on guidelines for pharmaceutical company gifts to physicians, I feel as if I need to take a blood pressure medicine to keep from having a stroke." In 2001 the AMA launched a campaign to educate doctors about the ethical perils of pharmaceutical

gifts, but it undercut its message by funding the campaign with money from the pharmaceutical industry.

Of course, most doctors are never offered free trips to Monaco or even a weekend at a spa; for them an industry gift means a Cialis pen or a Lexapro notepad. Yet it is a rare rep who cannot tell a story or two about the extravagant gifts doctors have requested. Oldani told me that one doctor asked him to build a music room in his house. Phyllis Adams, a former rep in Canada, was told by a doctor that he would not prescribe her product unless her company made him a consultant. (Both said no.) Carbona arranged

she reached over his shoulder into his drug closet and picked up a couple of sample packages of Zoloft and Celexa. Waving them in the air, she asked, "Tell me, Doctor, do the Pfizer and Forest reps bring lunch to your office staff?" A stony silence followed. Hal quietly ordered the rep out of the office and told her to never come back. She left in tears.

It's not hard to understand why Hal got so angry. The rep had broken the rules. Like an abrasive tourist who has not caught on to the code of manners in a foreign country, she had said outright the one thing that, by custom and common agreement, should never be said: that the lunches she

Doctors insist that gifts and perks from reps have no real effect. Studies in the medical literature indicate just the opposite. Doctors who take gifts from a company are more likely to prescribe that company's drugs.

a \$35,000 "unrestricted educational grant" for a doctor who wanted a swimming pool in his back yard. "It was the Wild West," says Jamie Reidy, whose frank memoir about his activities while working for Pfizer in the 1990s, *Hard Sell: The Evolution of a Viagra Salesman*, recently got him fired from Eli Lilly. "They cashed the check, and that was it. And hopefully they remembered you every time they turned on the TV, or bought a drink on the cruise, or dived into the pool."

The trick is to give doctors gifts without making them feel that they are being bought. "Bribes that aren't considered bribes," Oldani says. "This, my friend, is the essence of pharmaceutical gifting." According to Oldani, the way to make a gift feel different from a bribe is to make it personal. "Ideally, a rep finds a way to get into a scriptwriter's psyche," he says. "You need to have talked enough with a scriptwriter—or done enough recon with gatekeepers—that you know what to give." When Oldani found a pharmacist who liked to play the market, he gave him stock options. When he wanted to see a resistant oncologist, he talked to the doctor's nurse and then gave the oncologist a \$100 bottle of his favorite cognac. Reidy put the point nicely when he told me, "You are absolutely buying love."

Such gifts do not come with an explicit quid pro quo, of course. Whatever obligation doctors feel to write scripts for a rep's products usually comes from the general sense of reciprocity implied by the ritual of gift-giving. But it is impossible to avoid the hard reality informing these ritualized exchanges: reps would not give doctors free stuff if they did not expect more scripts.

My brother Hal, a psychiatrist currently on the faculty of Wake Forest University, told me about an encounter he had with a drug rep from Eli Lilly some years back, when he was in private practice. This rep was not one of his favorites; she was too aggressive. That day she had insisted on bringing lunch to his office staff, even though Hal asked her not to. As he tried to make polite conversation with her in the hall,

brought were intended as a bribe. What's more, they were a bribe that Hal had never agreed to accept. He likened the situation to having somebody drop off a bag of money in your garage without your consent and then ask, "So what about our little agreement?"

When an encounter between a doctor and a rep goes well, it is a delicate ritual of pretense and self-deception. Drug reps pretend that they are giving doctors impartial information. Doctors pretend that they take it seriously. Drug reps must try their best to influence doctors, while doctors must tell themselves that they are not being influenced. Drug reps must act as if they are not salespeople, while doctors must act as if they are not customers. And if, by accident, the real purpose of the exchange is revealed, the result is like an elaborate theatrical dance in which the masks and costumes suddenly drop off and the actors come face to face with one another as they really are. Nobody wants to see that happen.

THE NEW DRUG REPS?

Last spring a small group of first-year medical students at the University of Minnesota spoke to me about a lecture on erectile dysfunction that had just been given by a member of the urology department. The doctor's PowerPoint slides had a large, watermarked logo in the corner. At one point during the lecture a student raised his hand and, somewhat disingenuously, asked the urologist to explain the logo. The urologist, caught off guard, stumbled for a moment and then said that it was the logo for Cialis, a drug for erectile dysfunction that is manufactured by Eli Lilly. Another student asked if he had a special relationship with Eli Lilly. The urologist replied that yes, he was on the advisory board for the company, which had supplied the slides. But he quickly added that nobody needed to worry about the objectivity of his lecture, because he was also on the advisory boards of the makers of the competing drugs Viagra and Levitra. The second student told me, "A lot of people agreed that it was a pharm lecture and that we should have gotten a free breakfast."

This episode is not as unusual as it might appear. Drug company-sponsored consultancies, advisory-board memberships, and speaking engagements have become so common, especially among medical-school faculty, that the urologist probably never imagined that he would be challenged for lecturing to medical students with materials produced by Eli Lilly. According to a recent study in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, nine out of ten medical students have been asked or required by an attending physician to go to a lunch sponsored by a drug company. As of 2003, according to the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education, pharmaceutical companies were providing 90 percent of the \$1 billion spent annually on continuing medical education events, which doctors must attend in order to maintain their licensure.

Over the past year or two pharmaceutical profits have started to level off, and a backlash against reps has been felt; some companies have actually reduced their sales forces. But the industry as a whole is hiring more and more doctors as speakers. In 2004, it sponsored nearly twice as many educational events led by doctors as by reps. Not long before, the numbers had been roughly equal. This raises the question, Are doctors becoming the new drug reps?

Doctors are often the best people to market a drug to other doctors. Merck discovered this when it was developing a campaign for Vioxx, before the drug was taken off the market because of its association with heart attacks and strokes. According to an internal study by Merck, reported in *The Wall Street Journal*, doctors who attended a lecture by another doctor subsequently wrote nearly four times more prescriptions for Vioxx than doctors who attended an event led by a rep. The return on investment for doctor-led events was nearly twice that of rep-led events, even after subtracting the generous fees Merck paid to the doctors who spoke.

These speaking invitations work much like gifts. While reps hope, of course, that a doctor who is speaking on behalf of their company will give their drugs good PR, they also know that such a doctor is more likely to write prescriptions for their drugs. "If he didn't write, he wouldn't speak," a rep who has worked for four pharmaceutical companies told me. The semi-official industry term for these speakers and consultants is "thought leaders," or "key opinion leaders." Some thought leaders do not stay loyal to one company but rather generate a tidy supplemental income by speaking and consulting for a number of different companies. Reps refer to these doctors as "drug whores."

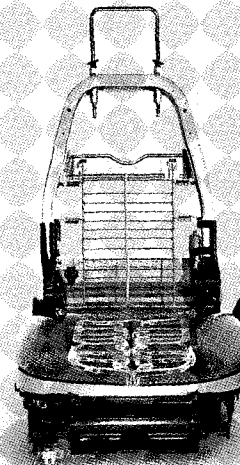
The seduction, whether by one company or several, is often quite gradual. My brother Hal explained to me how he wound up on the speakers' bureau of a major pharmaceutical company. It started when a company rep asked him if he'd be interested in giving a talk about clinical depression to a community group. The honorarium was \$1,000. Hal thought, *Why not?* It seemed almost a public service. The next time, the company asked him to talk not to the public but to practitioners at a community hospital. Soon company reps were making suggestions about content. "Why don't you mention the side-effect profiles of the different anti-

depressants?" they asked. Uneasy, Hal tried to ignore these suggestions. Still, the more talks he gave, the more the reps became focused on antidepressants rather than depression. The company began giving him PowerPoint slides to use, which he also ignored. The reps started telling him, "You know, we have you on the local circuit giving these talks, but you're medical-school faculty; we could get you on the national circuit. That's where the real money is." The mention of big money made him even more uneasy. Eventually the reps asked him to lecture about a new version of their antidepressant drug. Soon after that, Hal told them, "I can't do this anymore."

Looking back on this trajectory, Hal said, "It's kind of like you're a woman at a party, and your boss says to you, 'Look, do me a favor: be nice to this guy over there.' And you see the guy is not bad-looking, and you're unattached, so you say, 'Why not? I can be nice.'" The problem is that it never ends with that party. "Soon you find yourself on the way to a Bangkok brothel in the cargo hold of an unmarked plane. And you say, 'Whoa, this is not what I agreed to.' But then you have to ask yourself, 'When did the prostitution actually start? Wasn't it at that party?'"

Thought leaders serve an indispensable function when it comes to a potentially very lucrative marketing niche: off-label promotion, or promoting a drug for uses other than those for which it was approved by the FDA—something reps are strictly forbidden to do. The case of Neurontin is

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especially instructive. In 1996 a whistle-blower named David Franklin, a medical-science liaison with Parke-Davis (now a division of Pfizer), filed suit against the company over its off-label promotion of this drug. Neurontin was approved for the treatment of epilepsy, but according to the lawsuit, Parke-Davis was promoting it for other conditions—including bipolar disorder, migraines, and restless legs syndrome—for which there was little or no scientific evidence that it worked. To do so the company employed a variety of schemes, most involving a combination of rep ingenuity and payments to doctors. Some doctors signed ghostwritten journal articles.

Some drug companies have cut their sales forces, but the industry is hiring more and more doctors as speakers: they are often the best people to market a drug to other doctors. This raises the question: Are doctors becoming the new reps?

One received more than \$300,000 to speak about Neurontin at conferences. Others were paid just to listen. Simply having some of your thought leaders in attendance at a meeting is valuable, Kathleen Slattery-Moschkau explains, because they will often bring up off-label uses of a drug without having to be prompted. “You can’t get a better selling situation than that,” she says. In such circumstances all she had to do was pour the wine and make sure everyone was happy.

The litigation over Neurontin cost Pfizer \$430 million in criminal fines and civil damages for the period 1994 to 2002. It was well worth it. The drug’s popularity and profitability soared. In spite of the adverse publicity, Neurontin generated more than \$2.7 billion in revenues in 2003, more than 90 percent of which came from off-label prescriptions.

Of course, sometimes speakers discover that the drug they have been paid to lecture about is dangerous. One of the most notorious examples is Fen-Phen, the diet-drug combination that has been linked to primary pulmonary hypertension and valvular heart disease. Wyeth, the manufacturer of Redux, or dexfenfluramine—the “Fen” in Fen-Phen—has put aside \$21 billion to cover costs and liabilities from litigation. Similar events played out, on a lesser scale, with Parke-Davis’s diabetes drug Rezulin, and Wyeth’s pain reliever Duract, which were taken off the market after being associated with life-threatening complications.

And what about reps themselves? Do they trust their companies to tell them about potential problems with their drugs? Not exactly. As one veteran rep, voicing a common sentiment, told me, “Reps are the last to know.” Of course, for a rep to be detailing a drug enthusiastically right up to the day it is withdrawn from the market is likely to erode that rep’s credibility with doctors. Yet some reps say they don’t hear about problems until the press gets wind of them and the company launches into damage control. At that point, Slattery-Moschkau explains, “Reps learn verbatim how to handle the concern or objection in a way that spins it back in the drug’s favor.”

Some believe that the marketing landscape changed dramatically for both reps and doctors in 2002, after the Office of the Inspector General in the Department of Health and Human Services announced its intention to crack down on drug companies’ more notorious promotional practices. With the threat of prosecution in the air, the industry began to take the job of self-policing a lot more seriously, and PhRMA issued a set of voluntary marketing guidelines.

Although most reps agree that the PhRMA code has changed things, not all of them agree that it changed things for the better. Some say that as long as reps feel pressure to

meet quota, they will find ways to get around the rules. As one former rep pointed out, not all drug companies belong to PhRMA, and those that don’t are, of course, not bound by PhRMA’s guidelines. Jordan Katz says that things actually got worse after 2002. “The companies that tried to follow the guidelines lost a ton of market share, and the ones who didn’t gained it,” he says. “The bottom line is that if you don’t pay off the doctors, you will not succeed in pharmaceuticals. Period.”

A WORLD WITHOUT DOCTORS?

In 1997, John Lantos, a pediatrician and ethicist at the University of Chicago, wrote a book called *Do We Still Need Doctors?* We will always need health care, of course. But, as Lantos observes, it is not clear that we will always need to get our health care from doctors. Many of us already get it from other providers—nurses, physical therapists, clinical psychologists, nutritionists, respiratory therapists, and so on. The figure of “the doctor” is not cast in stone. It is really just a particular configuration of roles and duties and responsibilities, each of which can be changed.

Many have already been changed. Sometimes I think of my father as one of the last small-town, solo family doctors left in America. His kind of practice has been largely replaced by teams of specialists working in group practices underwritten by insurance companies and for-profit health-care chains. I doubt that any of the doctors my family has ever visited, except for a pediatrician who took care of our children when we lived in Montreal, would recognize us if they passed us in the street. Last year, while driving in Wisconsin, I filled up my car at a combination gas station, pharmacy, and walk-in medical clinic. I don’t mean to complain. As long as our health insurance has been paid up, we have usually gotten good care. We simply live in a country that has decided that the traditional figure of the doctor is not worth preserving in the face of modern economics. Instead, we put our trust in the market.

Perhaps we are right to do so. We can get used to a world without doctors. As Lantos points out, we have gotten used to a world where we have shoes but no cobblers. We can copy documents without scribes, make tools without blacksmiths, and produce books in the absence of bookbinders. We have left the old world behind, and for the most part, we don't miss it.

As the figure of the traditional doctor fades away, it is being replaced by a figure akin to the drug rep, one whose responsibilities are to compete as vigorously as possible in the medical marketplace. Patients are being replaced by "health-care consumers," who shop for the best medical bargains they can find. If it is true that the drug rep does not put my interests first, the same is true of everyone else in the marketplace; and we believe that such problems in the marketplace will be sorted out by the invisible hand. Buyers will stop buying from sellers who provide them with inferior goods. This model of medicine is not unlike that advocated thirty years ago by Robert Sade, a surgeon at my old medical school, the Medical University of South Carolina. Writing in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, Sade argued, "Medical care is neither a right nor a privilege: it is a service provided by doctors and others to people who wish to purchase it." He is now the vice chair of the AMA's Council of Ethical and Judicial Affairs.

Many doctors seem resigned to this shift. They see themselves as a beleaguered group whose lives are made miserable by third-party payers, personal-injury attorneys, and hospital bureaucrats. Whatever idealism they may have had about the practice of medicine is being pushed aside by the concrete realities of hustling in the new medical marketplace. Many academic physicians seem cowed by the power of the drug companies, upon whom some depend for research funding. For some, it's not so much a question of whether medicine has become a business as what kind of business it has become. When I talked recently to a gastroenterologist at an Ivy League medical school about his work as a thought leader for a variety of drug companies, he shrugged and said, "Better a whore than a concubine."

Which is not to say that pockets of resistance can't be found, especially among younger physicians and medical students. The American Medical Student Association may be the only mainstream medical organization with a principled position against taking industry gifts. It stands in striking contrast to the American Academy of Family Practice, which last year refused to grant exhibition space at its annual conference to No Free Lunch, a physician-led advocacy group that advises physicians to "Just say no to drug reps." The AAFP said that the group's goals were "not within the character and purpose" of the conference. But it allowed pharmaceutical companies, McDonald's, and the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States to exhibit. (It reversed its decision about No Free Lunch after protests by a number of AAFP members.)

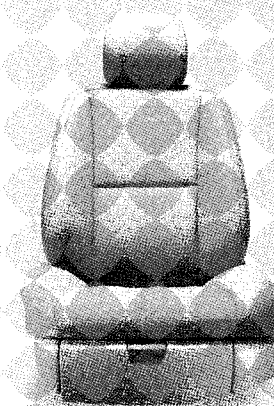
Whether doctors and reps are all that different from one another is no longer clear. Doctors know a lot more about medicine, and drug reps dress a lot better, but these days

both are Organization Men, small cogs in a vast health-care machine. They are just doing their jobs in a market-driven health-care bureaucracy that Americans have designed, and that we defend vigorously to critics elsewhere in the world. Like anyone else, doctors and reps are responding to the pressures and incentives of the system in which they work.

When Michael Oldani and I were having breakfast, he told me a story about a rep he interviewed for his dissertation. The rep had recently spent a day doing a "preceptorship," a practice in which a drug company pays doctors to let a rep shadow them while they see patients. This rep was shadowing a high-prescribing psychiatrist (she called him "Dr. C") at a med-check clinic. Med-check clinics are extremely busy sites where psychiatrists see large numbers of patients in quick succession, mainly to make sure that their medications are in proper order. At one point during the day, the rep said, a cheerful man in a wheelchair rolled into the office. Barely looking up from the stack of charts on his desk, Dr. C started quizzing the man about his medications. After a few minutes the man interrupted. "Look at me, Dr. C. Notice anything different?" Dr. C pushed his glasses up on top of his head and looked carefully at the patient for a few seconds before replying, "No, I don't. What's up?" The man smiled and said excitedly, "I got my legs cut off!"

After a moment of silence, Dr. C smiled. The man laughed. Neither seemed upset. In a few minutes the session ended, and the next patient came in. ▀

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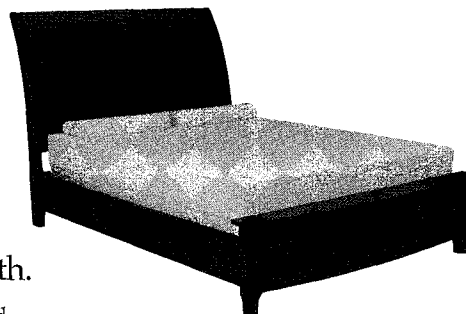
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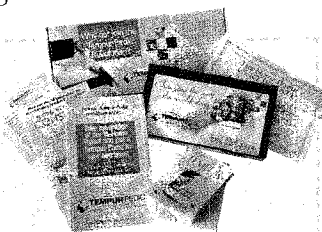
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THE CRITICS

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EDITOR'S CHOICE

Lee and Sherman

What to read this month—and what not to

BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

Peggy Lee was “too good for her own good,” as the jazz critic George Hoefer discerned in 1959 (a remark quoted in this book, though it’s misattributed to John Tynan). The range of her talents and the reach of her appeal obscured her extraordinary accomplishments and somewhat dented her prestige. Listeners won over by her gigantic pop hits were at a loss when she returned, as she always did, to her jazz roots. But some jazz purists shunned her because of such crossover recording successes as “It’s a Good Day,” “Golden Earrings,” “Mañana,” and the songs in Disney’s *Lady and the Tramp*—all of which she wrote. Lee, of course, was one of the first great singer-songwriters (she amassed more than 200 composing credits). She was also among her era’s finest recording artists (with her 1956 *Black Coffee*, which epitomized world-weary sophistication for a generation, she pioneered the “concept album”). She was, moreover, the greatest chanteuse of her age (her minimalist and confessional style perfectly suited the intimacy of the nightclub, and her act at *Ciro’s* in the 1940s and, above all, her engagement at *Basin Street East* in the winter of 1961 remain legendary). She was, as Hoefer declared, simply “the greatest white female jazz singer since Mildred Bailey.”

To some, this is like being declared the best Jewish player in the NBA. But in fact Lee interpreted the urbane lyrics of the American songbook with a knowingness, a resigned wit, a refined intelligence, a quizzical irony—conspicuous already in her first recording triumph, “Why Don’t You Do Right?” with the Benny Goodman Band—that Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, and Billie Holiday could not approach. On stage she didn’t emote; she arched an eyebrow. The introspective, slightly New Agey, domestically oriented Lee also led an unusual life for a female entertainer of her time. Many of her closest friends were men—Bing Crosby, Johnny Mercer (her mentor as a lyricist), Jimmy Durante, Frank Sinatra (only with the last was she romantically linked). For a good part of her career, she was a single mother. Her unremarkable 1989 autobiography (which, alas, she insisted on authoring without the aid of a ghost writer) revealed little about the nature of those friendships or her experiences raising her daughter,



FEVER: THE LIFE
AND MUSIC OF
MISS PEGGY LEE

by Peter Richmond
Holt



although it was famously direct, if understandably opaque, regarding her traumatic childhood on the plains of North Dakota (Lee's father was an amiable but ineffectual alcoholic; her stepmother beat her with sadistic regularity). This book, which perforce draws heavily on Lee's, adds little to that picture.

Richmond, though, firmly grasps Lee's musicianship, even if his sound judgments often lack specificity (he doesn't, for instance, assess precisely the enduring influence of the Goodman Band, for which she was the canary from 1941 to 1943, on her phrasing and technique, although he rightly and astutely acknowledges her 1942 recording with the band of "Where or When"—the loveliest rendition ever of that supremely lovely song—as a landmark of her "maturing style"). But he fails to put Lee—in many ways as emblematic of mid-century America's cultural and sexual style as was Sinatra—in a broader context, in the way that Gary Giddins brilliantly did for Bing Crosby. Musicians, for the most part, leave scant documentary records. So a great biography, like Giddins's, must be as much a cultural history as a life history. Five singers warrant that sort of treatment: Armstrong, Holiday, Crosby, Sinatra, and Lee. Only one has yet received it.



Upon the Altar of the Nation: A Moral History of the Civil War, by Harry S. Stout (Viking). This book's subtitle will provoke some confusion. The work isn't a consideration of the ultimate justice of the conflict (the author blithely takes that complex proposition for granted), nor does it primarily explore the war's relationship to slavery. Rather, Stout applies ethical standards to the prosecution of the war. This can at times be a tiresome exercise, but it yields some refreshing and unsettling (albeit often unintended) insights into the most probed of America's conflicts, and into aspects of this country's moral narcissism, which much of the rest of the world has frequently found at best puzzling and at worst insufferable. First, though, one must acknowledge the book's many and egregious faults.

Stout may be among the foremost historians of American Christianity, but

PHOTOS BY WILLIAM "TOBY" BANDOUPH/COPYRIGHT 2006—

his book is yet further proof that the professoriat has no business teaching the country's youth how to write. The diffuse, 550-plus-page tome is riddled with sloppy diction (he writes of the "enormity" of the achievement of abolition) and ham-handed prose (the "Civil War may have ended with a whimper, but ongoing debates ... contain a good bit of bang"). Stout gives lengthy potted histories of most of the war's campaigns and major battles, leaving the poor reader to attempt to discern what all these unfocused accounts have to do with the often slackly developed contentions—more often gestured at than argued—that the author advances.

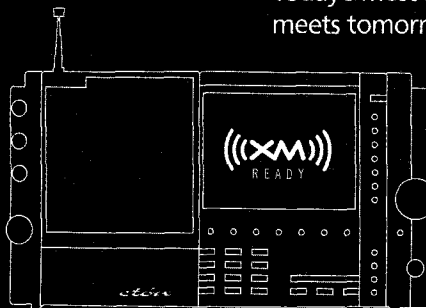
Still, both Stout's sensitivity to religious rhetoric and the spiritual and ethical lens through which he examines the war allow him to show, if not really to explicate, how the North's understanding of its purpose bequeathed to the country a muddled, missionary civic religion, which "sacralized" the American state and "elevat[ed] America as its own religion." During the conflict, this evolving civic religion provided a "moral high ground," which justified any military action; indeed, questions about the war's just conduct went all but unasked. (Lincoln is the chief culprit in this development. An honest progressive should acknowledge that if George W. Bush were to deliver Lincoln's lofty but gaseous and quasi-mystical Second Inaugural Address, said progressive would castigate that speech as, well, gaseous and quasi-mystical—and as evidence of a president's dangerous belief in America's messianic destiny. Then again, Lincoln is clearly Stout's hero, so the question of what, precisely, Stout makes of that civic religion is among the many things left frustratingly vague in his book.)

The Second World War and the North's Civil War are enshrined as America's Good Wars, so Stout's dogged and somewhat repetitious efforts to remind readers of the often useless battlefield slaughter that marked the conflict may have the happy effect of ruffling some Civil War buffs and those pseudo-tough-guy liberal historians who hail the struggle as an abolitionist crusade. But in fact their time would

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Scars of War, Wounds of Peace, by Shlomo Ben-Ami (Oxford). Because it's a bracing and honest history of the Arab-Zionist confrontation, this book will displease partisans of both sides. But unconditional supporters of Israel will find both its challenges to many of the country's founding myths and its frequently severe appraisals of Israeli policies over the past half century especially disconcerting, because its author, a trained historian, was also Israel's minister of foreign affairs. Although Ben-Ami should be praised for his unsparing account, readers

looking for a clear-eyed narrative of this fraught and intricate subject should turn instead to Benny Morris's astringent, nuanced, and superbly written *Righteous Victims*, which remains the peerless chronicle.

Ben-Ami's work, which incorporates the more sober and responsible insights of Israeli revisionist scholars, covers the period from the late nineteenth century to the present, but it concentrates on Arab-Israeli relations since the 1980s, and especially on the already well-chronicled story of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations from the Oslo Accords to the failed 2000 Camp David talks (in which he was a participant). Moreover, although he writes clearly when recounting long-past events and long-dead figures (he fashions an especially astute appraisal of David Ben-Gurion), Ben-Ami lapses into nebulous diplo-blah-blah ("an international alliance for peace ... was needed in order to articulate a new peace paradigm") when analyzing events in which he was an actor.

Still, his assessments are often spot-on: he correctly emphasizes that Israel's basic motivation for erecting the separation barrier was to forestall the danger of a Palestinian demand for a "one-state solution"; he cogently argues that it was only unbending and even aggressive Israeli behavior—behavior he often judges harshly—that forced the Arab world to reconcile itself to the Jewish state; and he nicely highlights the historical continuities in Zionist-Palestinian relations, specifically the geographic and demographic realities that, after more than a century, still render impossible an accommodation between the two peoples.

Indeed, this is, rightly, a bleak book. Ben-Ami seems to grasp the dire long-term prospects confronting the Jewish state (owing to those vexing geographic and demographic realities), and his only way out is an international scheme to negotiate and supervise a new partition of Palestine (led by—you guessed it—the United States), which would necessitate a large peacekeeping force. Yet just over four years ago, Ben-Ami presciently acknowledged that it's "not improbable" (!) that radical Islamists

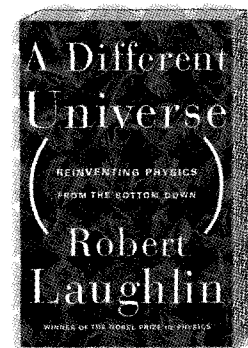
will gain power in Palestine, "possibly even democratically" (!)—which means that the likelihood that "the international community" will police that dangerous and volatile neighborhood is virtually nil. Israelis convincingly argue that the anarchic and hostile Palestinian factions don't present a partner for peace, but even less do they present a partner for peacemakers. Which leaves Jerusalem, much to Ben-Ami's understandable dismay, unilaterally erecting the barrier (a solution that obviates some of the Jewish state's pressing tactical problems, even as it promises to exacerbate its—admittedly, seemingly insoluble—strategic ones).

Although Isabel Kershner, senior editor of *The Jerusalem Report*, has over the years written some of the most crisply intelligent journalistic analyses of Israeli-Palestinian relations to appear anywhere, her book, *Barrier* (Palgrave), takes a human-interest approach. The result is a sometimes vivid but more often stale series of sketches that don't play to the author's strengths, and that fail to illuminate those vexing geographic and demographic realities—and the concomitant, elaborate calculations—behind Israeli policy.

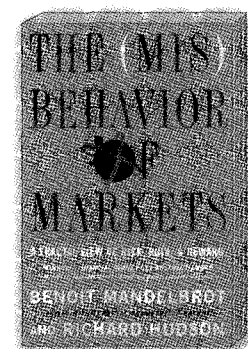
Finally, we've expanded the name of this section, to "The Critics: Books, Manners, Mores," in order to reflect what have long been its peculiar goals and points of view. As I noted in this column more than two years ago, we explore in this department "the way the professional class lives now—its anxieties and obsessions; what its members spend their money and time on; what they talk about on dates and after dates, at dinner parties, and on the sidelines during their kids' soccer practice. The ... subjects range from ... competition in the workplace to creating a home life; from courtship, sex, and marriage to homework, raising kids, and the problems facing teenage girls. We believe that these issues—together with the way they're framed and defined by the books people read—should be the subject of discerning, sympathetic, occasionally tart cultural criticism."

Benjamin Schwarz is the literary editor and the national editor of The Atlantic.

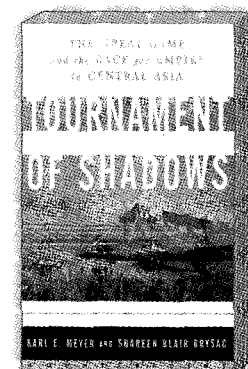
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Bottoms Up

Ian Fleming, the man behind James Bond, was a sadist, a narcissist, and an all-around repressed pervert. But he also saw past the confines of the Cold War

BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

I want to suggest that the anal anxiety of *Diamonds* is primarily important not as a textbook illustration of the Rat Man's particular obsessions, but as a surface trace of a deeper phenomenon. I'd like to argue that the Bond universe is premised on a certain obsessive-compulsive logic, but a logic that can more profitably be understood as Althusserian and ideological rather than as simply Freudian and psychological, a logic that is less about regression to infantile sexuality than about the hopes and anxieties spawned by postwar culture.

—Dennis W. Allen, “‘Alimentary, Dr. Leiter’: Anal Anxiety in *Diamonds Are Forever*”

The above is excerpted from the essay collection *Ian Fleming & James Bond: The Cultural Politics of 007*, which was also the name of a symposium held at Indiana University in 2003. Bloomington, of all places, is the repository of the bulk of Fleming's books and papers. These, according to an excellent biography by Andrew Lycett, include *State of Excitement*, Fleming's only unpublished work—disappointingly enough, an account of a trip he made to Kuwait in 1960. (The book failed to meet with the approval of the Kuwait Oil Company, which had commissioned it but did not care for its tone. So it is not the case that Fleming invariably romanticized British post-colonialism.)

Now consider this:

The point of Felix Leiter, such a nonentity as a piece of characterization, is that he, the American, takes orders from Bond, the Britisher, and that Bond is constantly doing better than he, showing himself, not braver or more devoted, but smarter, wlier, tougher, more resourceful—the incarnation of little old England



with her quiet ways and shoestring budget wiping the eye of great big global-tentacled multi-billion-dollar-appropriating America.

—Kingsley Amis, *The James Bond Dossier*

I cannot think of anyone more likely to have ridiculed a “postmodern” conference on the work of Fleming and the semiotics of Bond than the author of this passage. Yet it seems that even Amis felt that Fleming's novels could not be taken at face value. Bond's triumph over Leiter in *Diamonds*—he tells him where to look inside a corpse for hidden stones—is perhaps an instance of British “guts” rather than British anality. Bond himself is almost always described, and describes himself, as “English,” but in the premature *Times* obituary that is printed in the late-bloomer *You Only Live Twice*, he is described as having had a Scottish father and a Swiss mother and thus cannot be said to be English at all. Still, there is no doubt that the CIA man Leiter is made from indigestible cardboard—a sort of Jamesian foil for Bond's superior sophistication. (My own very small contribution to Bond studies has been to point out that “Leiter” was

the family name of the rich American woman who married Lord Curzon, in the great age of matrimonial alliances between Churchills, Vanderbilts, and Astors, thus helping to secure his fortune and her position in society.) Other than that, Felix Leiter can indeed be read as a sort of signifier or cipher.

And “cipher” is the nom de guerre of Le Chiffre, the numbers-man racketeer of the French Communist Party and perhaps the most odiously sadistic of Fleming's villains. He features in the first of the published Bond books, *Casino Royale*, which is the only one that has not been made into a “serious” film. A farcical and noncanonical version of it was made starring Peter Sellers and David Niven, which causes one to reflect upon what might have happened had Fleming got his way and secured Niven instead of Sean Connery as the original Bond. (Role selection was not Fleming's strong suit; he invited Noël Coward, his neighbor in Jamaica, to take the part of Dr. No—picture it if you will.) Now it seems that a fresh *Casino Royale* will be made, and the new casting will give us Daniel Craig as Bond. You may have caught Mr. Craig playing a hopelessly sinister and useless South African Jew

JONATHAN CARLSON

in Steven Spielberg's laughable *Munich* ("the owly blid thit mitters to mee is *Jewish blid*"). We are, so to speak, back where we started.

My own adolescence coincided perfectly with the emergence of the somehow brilliantly named Ursula Andress from the foaming Jamaican breakers, in *Dr. No*. (Fleming gave stupid mock monikers to many of his cock-fodder heroines, from Pussy Galore to Kissy Suzuki, but Ursula Andress is a natural porn name if ever I've struck one.) One noted various things about Andress, from the knife belt around her waist to the blade hanging against her thigh, and then feverishly consulted the original text, only

servatives to power, and helped enable Fleming to be more frankly Churchillian and pro-imperial than would have been possible a few years previously.

The second element, namely a distinctive blend of fine leather, good tailoring, and club-land confidence, was of huge importance in appealing to American Anglophilia—perhaps most especially the sort of Anglophilia that had led the United States to clone the Office of Strategic Services, and later the CIA, from the British MI5 and MI6. Fleming himself had played a supporting part in this process, visiting wartime Washington for the British Naval Intelligence Division and writing a lengthy

The paradox of the classic Bond stories is that, although superficially devoted to the Anglo-American war against communism, they are full of contempt for America.

to discover that it adhered to a constant theme and also awarded her a boy's rear end. Concerning this decision, Coward wrote to Fleming, "I know that we are all becoming progressively more broad-minded nowadays but really, old chap, what *could* you have been thinking of?"

Anyway, for the first time in my life I had found a book that everybody else, including my pustular contemporaries, had also read. And this was very handy for the give-and-take of textual criticism. Today, however, I can be virtually certain that most Americans below a certain age know of Fleming solely, or chiefly, through the movies. It is under this guise only that the product has been bonded for universal export.

People like to condescend to the brand-name snobbery and Savile Row (or Bond Street) affectation, but these are only the outward show of two of the books' most important elements. When Fleming started to publish his stories, Britain was only just emerging from a long period of postwar austerity and uniformity, and it was beginning to be possible to emphasize luxury and style again without having a bad conscience. This development was somewhat identified with the return of the British Con-

memo on the ways in which London could be of help to "the Cousins." He was to pay another call in 1960, to meet John F. Kennedy and discuss a number of demented schemes for the elimination of Fidel Castro. (In 1961, *Life* magazine printed the boy president's list of "top ten" books, with *From Russia With Love* coming in at No. 9; we have paid dearly for this juvenile taste.) In the interim, however, British imperialism had come to a humiliating halt at Suez in 1956, as a direct consequence of President Eisenhower's refusal to support the Anglo-French-Israeli invasion of Egypt. Fleming had every reason to take this personally: the British prime minister at the time, Sir Anthony Eden, had gone at least temporarily insane and been forced to take a long rest—which he did at Goldeneye, Fleming's private Jamaican retreat.

Thus, the central paradox of the classic Bond stories is that, although superficially devoted to the Anglo-American war against communism, they are full of contempt and resentment for America and Americans. And not just political contempt, or the penis envy of a declining power for a burgeoning one, but cultural contempt as well. And not just with cultural contempt in general,

NEW FICTION

Finds and flops

BY JOSEPH O'NEILL

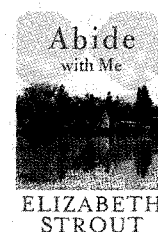
The seven years that have passed since the publication of Elizabeth Strout's first novel, *Amy and Isabelle*, have served only to increase her reputation and her readership—and this lovely second novel confirms Strout as the possessor of an irresistibly companionable, peculiarly American voice: folksy, poetic, but always as precise as a shadow on a brilliant winter day. The interaction of eye and earth and blue sky is itself a recurring motif in *Abide With Me*, whose recently widowed protagonist, the Reverend Tyler Caskey, yearns for the numinous certainty ("The Feeling," he calls it) once readily delivered to him by the heavens and fields and woods around West Annett, Maine—the small, gossip-infested town where we find him living, in 1959.

As he labors over his sermons and reflects upon the martyrdom of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Tyler discovers

that his grief—and the wants of his two young daughters and his all-too-human flock—are beyond the slightly nitwitted mysticism that has hitherto sustained him as a cleric and as a man. His—and his community's—passage to greater spiritual maturity is the tragicomic, often stormy stuff of this novel.

This kind of fictional project is, of course, threatened by gratuitousness. Countless books and movies return from Eisenhower's America with the same news: it was a repressed, freaky time. But Tyler's essential struggle—to retain a meaningful sense of wonder and truth when faced with the rise of therapeutic psychology and its mundane, overweening explications of the human—resembles a contemporary American cultural struggle against spiritual and intellectual debasement, the one we're forced to wage against the likes of Jerry Springer and Pat Robertson and George W. Bush. *Abide With Me*, then, has this further resonance: it embodies humane qualities—excellence and conscientious exactness—that fortify us in our own version of its hero's quest.

Joseph O'Neill is a novelist whose most recent book is *Blood-Dark Track: A Family History*.



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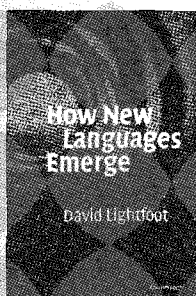
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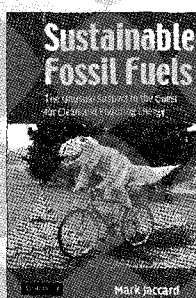
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but more specifically disgust about America's plebeian interest in sex and consumerism, the two Bond staples. "Baseball, amusement arcades, hot dogs, hideously large bosoms, neon lighting" is how Tiger Tanaka mouths the anti-American trope in *You Only Live Twice*. And how does Bond react when praised by the exquisite Tatiana Romanova for his resemblance to an American film star? By barking, "For God's sake! That's the worst insult you can pay a man!" This and other revulsions from the Hollywood ethos (a similar distaste is evinced in *For Your Eyes Only*) are an irony in themselves. And notice, please, that emphasis on "hideously large bosoms." Some displacement seems to be involved here. For Fleming, it was the southern hemispheres that counted, and size mattered like hell.

I am afraid that the mention of Tatiana Romanova obliges me to record that Fleming described her otherwise peerless behind as "so hardened with exercise that it had lost the smooth downward feminine sweep, and now, round at the back and flat and hard at the sides, it jutted like a man's." Not quite like a boy's, in other words. How is one to deal with the blizzard of information on this point? From Lycett's biography we learn that the young Fleming had not only a mentor whose pseudonym was Phyllis Bottome but also a lover named Monique Panchaud de Bottomes. This might be coincidence (it could hardly be conspiracy), but in that same premature *Times* obituary, ostensibly written by "M," we are expected to believe that the newly orphaned Bond was sent to live with an aunt in the "quaintly named" Kentish hamlet of Pett Bottom. "That was just a love-pat," says the boorish Australian "Dikko" Henderson in *For Your Eyes Only*, after he's floored a Japanese chick. "What's a girl's bottom for, anyway?" Fleming himself appeared to have a ready answer to this question. As he wrote to his complaisant future wife, who seems to have shared some of his tastes, "I am the chosen instrument of the Holy Man to whip some of the devil out of you, and I must do my duty however much pain it causes me. So be prepared to drink your cocktails standing for a few days."

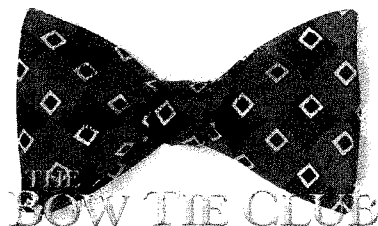
When one really reflects on the memorable scenes in the fiction (shall I say those that stick out?), it becomes obvious that Fleming expended much more careful thought on torture than on sex. It is true that Bond's bottom is never threatened (Coward would have put a swift stop to any of *that*), but the other menaces and taunts and practices are distinctly lascivious and lovingly rehearsed. Even Simon Raven, giving *Casino Royale* an admiring review, protested that the torture scene was essentially unpardonable.

But there is no point in being prissy about this. If Fleming had not been quite a heavy sadist and narcissist and all-around repressed pervert, we might never have got to know Rosa Klebb or Auric Goldfinger or Ernst Stavro Blofeld. And, having said that Bond was originally a figure designed to hold up the British end of the "special relationship," I ought to add that the cleverness of the series lay partly in how it saw past the confines of the Cold War. The transition probably begins after *From Russia With Love*. Who would have believed a paranoid tale about the Bulgarians shooting the pope in 1982 if it had not been for the memory of Moscow's Bulgar robots in that adventure? The stories are a kind of bridge from the period of ideological warfare to our own, where the fear of a frigid colossus or a nuclear "exchange" has been deposed by the fear of an uncorked psychopath and a "dirty bomb." However anal that last stupid expression may be (a toilet-trained bomb is perhaps more a wish than a possibility), it was Fleming who first conjured it and who reached beyond the KGB into our world of the Colombian cartel, the Russian mafia, and other "non-state actors" like al-Qaeda. "SPECTRE," I noticed recently, is an anagram of "Respect," the name of a small British party led by a power-drunk micro-megalomaniac called George Galloway, a man with a friendly connection to Saddam Hussein.

Also rather contemporary, at least from one end of the special relationship, is the cold dislike of France that keeps recurring. Le Chiffre and Goldfinger both act for the French Communists. Rosa Klebb can operate in Paris with ease, thanks to the climate of treason

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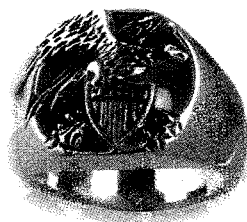


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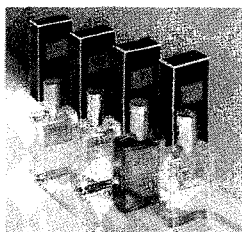
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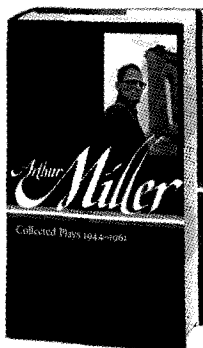
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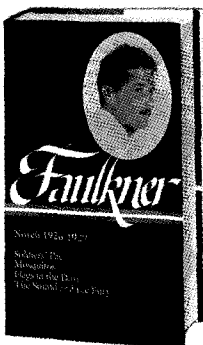
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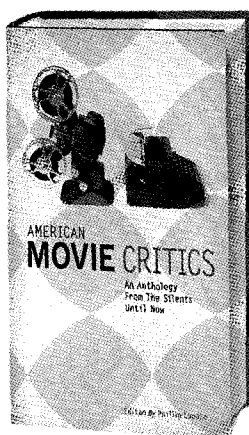
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that pervades the place. Bond finds Paris empty and hypocritical, like a cynical whore. "It was its heart that was gone," Fleming writes, "pawned to the tourists, pawned to the Russians and Rumanians and Bulgars, pawned to the scum of the world who had gradually taken the town over." That reflection occurs in "From a View to a Kill," published in 1960 in the short-story collection *For Your Eyes Only*, where even Castro's rebels are granted some grudging sympathy (the Caribbean then being Britain's backyard, thanks all the same, and not some polluted Yankee pond).

Fleming once confessed that he hoped to "take the story along so fast that nobody would notice the idiosyncrasies." Fat chance. His "idiosyncrasies" jut out like Tatiana Romanova's ass. What he ought to have said was that he hoped to pile on the pace and thereby hustle the reader past the point where belief has to be suspended. The smaller details, of products and appurtenances and accessories, fulfill the function of the conjuror's other hand. They distract attention from the glaring lacunae in the plots, the amazing stupidity of the supposedly mastermind villains, and the reckless disregard for his own safety that this supposedly ice-cold agent displays by falling for every lure. Another critic whose exegesis might have startled Bond's creator was Umberto Eco, who wrote:

Fleming takes time to convey the familiar with photographic accuracy, because it is upon the familiar that he can solicit our capacity for identification. Our credulity is solicited, blandished, directed to the region of possible and desirable things. Here the narration is realistic, the attention to detail intense; for the rest, so far as the unlikely is concerned, a few pages suffice and an implicit wink of the eye.

The movie industry saw through this trick and learned, with such a big wink, how to replicate it for the masses and to make even Fleming's pulp fiction look like literature. Fleming was angling for Hollywood, however much he may have despised it. ▀

Christopher Hitchens is a contributing editor of *The Atlantic* and a columnist for *Vanity Fair*.

Touch of Evil

A selective investigation of recent mysteries and thrillers

BY B. R. MYERS

The popularity of Henning Mankell's Inspector Wallander, who is said to make female fans want to mother him, has been a mixed blessing for readers of detective fiction. The good thing is that more foreign novels are being translated into English. The bad thing is that much the same Wallander type is now on duty from Reykjavik to Rio: a downbeat but lovable man in his forties or fifties, out of tune with the age—though hardly eccentric—and trying heroically to live without a woman. Poignant scenes of microwave cooking abound.

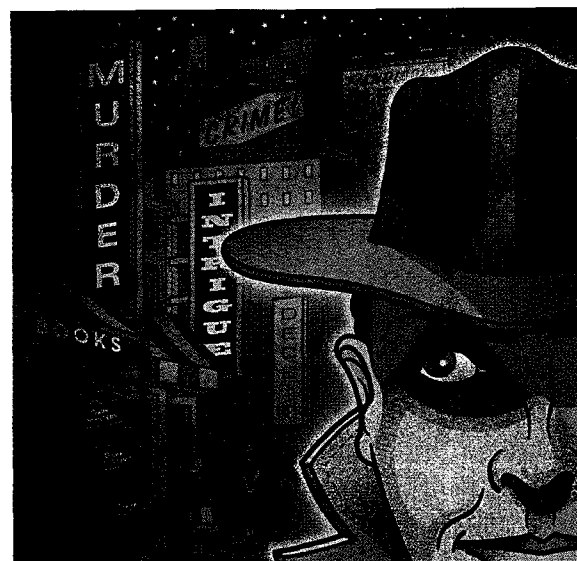
Karin Fossum's Inspector Sejer, for example, is a lanky widower "dragging on alone for the ninth year." In *He Who Fears the Wolf* (Harcourt), the latest installment of this Norwegian series to be published in America, a young schizophrenic escapes from a mental institution and heads for the forest, where an old recluse is later found murdered. It's a setup worthy of the novel's menacing cover, but in a farcical twist the schizophrenic is taken hostage by a bank robber on the lam. We soon learn that both fugitives are as lovable as Sejer himself. Like all men I have a maternal instinct, but I can clutch only so many characters to my breast at one time, and when the odd couple crosses paths with a little bird-hunting brat, I couldn't help hoping he would set the schizophrenic off. Old Sejer putters about on the periphery of the narrative, solving a murder that no longer seems to matter. This is the problem with these sad-sack sleuths: their own creators get bored of them. Mankell recently took a long break from Inspector Wallander, and Luiz Alfredo Garcia-Roza, the Brazilian writer, plans to give his Inspector Espinosa a rest after only the fifth novel in the series.

That fifth novel is *Pursuit* (Holt), in which a Copacabana psychiatrist commits to a mental institution a patient who has been stalking him. The patient disappears soon after his release, as does

one of the psychiatrist's daughters. Like Espinosa, who mulls things over every night while waiting for his microwave to beep, we find our suspicion shifting back and forth from the psychiatrist to the missing man. Having been written for Brazilian readers, *Pursuit* does little to evoke the sights and sounds of the place, though repeated references to street crime did take me back to the chilly August night I was mugged at knife-point in São Paulo. Benjamin Moser's translation from the Portuguese is superb, the only infelicity—the American expression "going south" in the sense of "going bad"—appearing on the first page.

I should make clear that Garcia-Roza likes to leave loose ends. Here too the detective's resolution of the case is so brief, sketchy, and uncorroborated by evidence that one wonders if it is to be believed at all. The author has told interviewers that the endings of his novels are "really determined by the reader," but that probably doesn't happen very often. A few readers will relish the open-endedness for its own sake, while the rest will feel a bit cheated. Most of us, I think, read whodunits for the pleasure of following a ratiocinative process, not to be left wondering which fictional character did what to whom; the real world offers far more interesting imponderables than that. Ian McEwan has recently remarked that magic realism can come off as a cop-out, a flight from the hard writing that a more straightforward approach demands. The same can be said of the vague denouement in detective fiction. *Pursuit* merits reading all the same. Memorably eerie are the scenes chronicling the emotional collapse of the psychiatrist and his family.

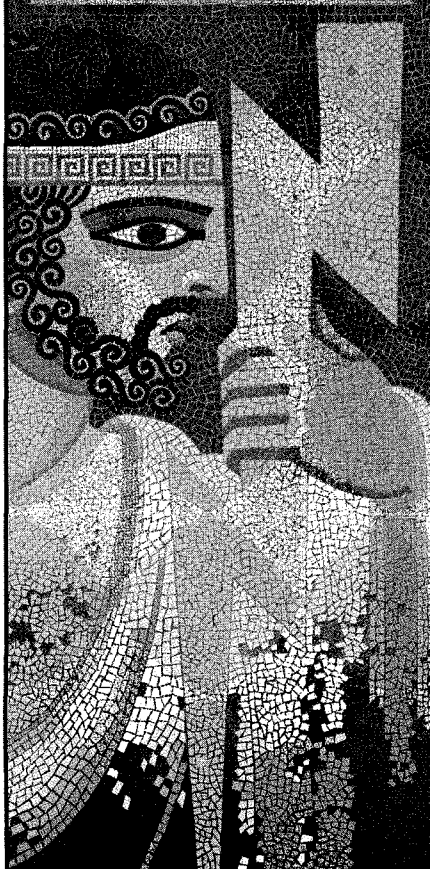
More conventional is Arnaldur Indridason's *Jar City* (Minotaur), the first



of the Icelandic novelist's mysteries to be translated into English. How conventional? Let's just say that Inspector Erlendur (divorced, "tasteless microwave dinners") is moved by wet weather to wonder whether rain "was necessary to wash people's sins away every now and then." And the killer leaves a cryptic note near the corpse, as killers do. Fortunately, the strangeness of the locale helps *Jar City* transcend its clichés. Lava fields threaten to swallow up the careless driver, a man's apartment is strewn with half-eaten sheep's heads, and everyone in the country is literally on a first-name basis with everyone else. (Half of the names in *Jar City* seem to start with "E," which makes for confusion.) When an aging rapist with a hereditary disorder is bludgeoned to death decades after his crime, the identity of the killer is not all that hard to figure out, but the novel's social dimension makes *Jar City* a rewarding read. Iceland's real-life genetic database, a work in controversial progress, is central both to the murder and to the detective's efforts to find the killer.

Jar City and *He Who Fears the Wolf* belong to the increasingly common form known as the "cozy procedural," a hybrid of the traditional detective novel and the police procedural. Those who prefer the latter subgenre in all its urban grittiness will enjoy *Fiddlers* (Harcourt), the latest of Ed McBain's "87th Precinct" novels. Detective Carella and his colleagues are reluctant to assume that a serial killer is to blame for the deaths of a blind violinist, a cosmetics sales representative,

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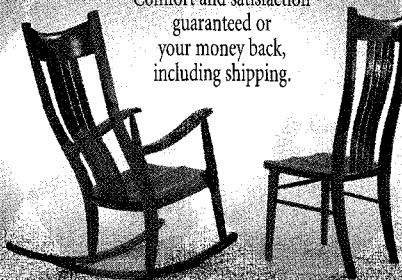
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and other seemingly unconnected individuals. Why reluctant? Because the victims are all over fifty years old, and thus part of a demographic that is evidently no more interesting to serial killers than to the entertainment industry. Ah, but it turns out that violinists aren't the only "fiddlers," to use a word that holds part of the solution to the case.

This is a fast and engrossing book. Some writers lazily presume on our familiarity with their characters, but the characterization of Carella and the other cops is rich enough that readers new to the 87th Precinct will quickly find their footing. McBain is one of those utterly unracist writers whose depictions of minorities can strike wrong notes, and here I could have done without the Korean pedicure customer "with her skirt pulled up almost to Seoul." On the other hand, a story line about the romance between the killer and a call girl is surprisingly involving. Their conversations offer additional evidence that McBain (or Evan Hunter, to use the novelist's other pseudonym) is the true king of American dialogue. Salvatore Lombino died last year at the age of seventy-eight, but I don't want to talk about him in the past tense. He is at work whenever we open his books.

Patrick Neate's *City of Tiny Lights* (Riverhead) introduces us to a Ugandan-Indian private eye named Tommy Akhtar. A boozing, chain-smoking veteran of the Afghan mujahedeen, and nothing if not a welcome change from the lonely micro-wavers, he is asked to take on the case of a Russian call girl who has gone missing after an assignation in a London dive. In fiction, missing call girls tend to mean guilty politicians; Akhtar's investigations take him down a somewhat more original road that involves the enemies of the Establishment as well.

Though the dialogue is excellent and the story well paced, Neate's hero narrates everything in a tiresome stream of slang and wordplay. "The proverbial ... hit the rotating"; "there was no sunbeam glistening from my pearlies." The reader, who assumes that this is *meant* to be tiresome—and who doesn't believe those Afghan war stories for an instant—keeps expecting the gabby pretender to be forced into a critical account of himself, like Keith Waterhouse's Billy

Liar, or the argot-spouting Alex in *A Clockwork Orange*. But on and on Neate/Akhtar riffs, refusing to be serious about Islamic terrorism, the fight against it, or any of the other political issues the story raises. "It is hard not to write satire," a character says at one point, quoting Juvenal, but the irony here is too scattershot to communicate anything to the reader except the narrator's inexplicable sense of intellectual superiority to the world.

After a few expository chapters, Jeffrey Archer's new thriller, *False Impression* (St. Martin's), gets moving with a harrowingly vivid depiction of a young woman's escape from the World Trade Center on 9/11. If anything, this part is *too* good, creating problems of tone for a novel that on the whole is rather camp. Plucky Anna bounces back from her ordeal the next morning, so eager is she to get a Van Gogh back to the nice lady who deserves it, but a Romanian tycoon dispatches a tiny hit woman to steal the painting away. None of this can worry us much after what Anna has already survived.

Archer collects paintings in real life, but for all that *False Impression* imparts of his expertise, the characters might as well be fighting over a shipment of iPods. Overestimating our impatience to see everything wrapped up, the author hews to a brisk log of the international chase, never delaying things long enough for suspense to build. This is how he handles the intriguing image of the hit woman waking up in a construction crane: "She stared down on Tokyo as the sun rose over the Imperial Palace. She checked her watch. Five fifty-six a.m. Time to descend ..." I disagree. Pure plot is just as boring as the pure lack of it.

Then again, a summary of the twists and turns in Natsuo Kirino's *Out* (Vintage) would still be more entertaining than the average thriller. Proceeding from the Chamfortian assumption that such a widely acclaimed book was bound to be awful, I put off reading this Japanese novel until the paperback edition came out. A Tokyo housewife working nights at a factory strangles her abusive husband. Her co-worker Masako, a middle-aged woman angry

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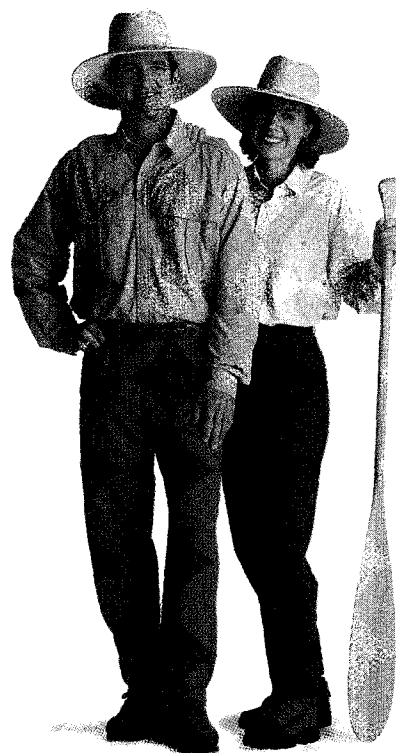
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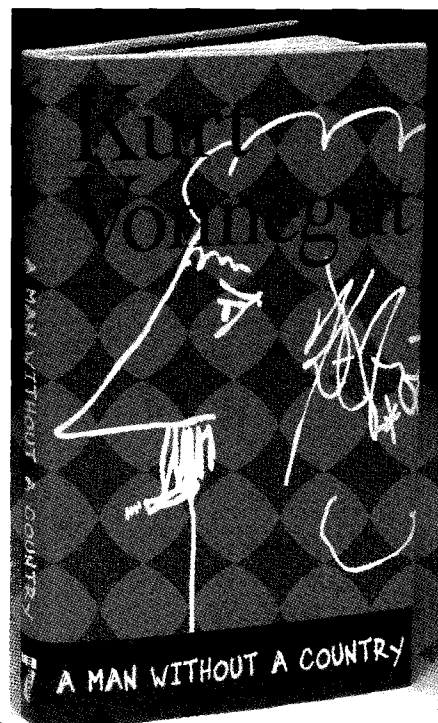
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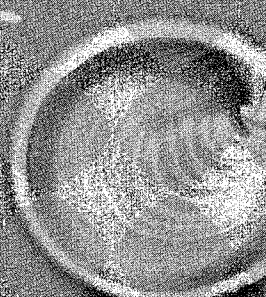
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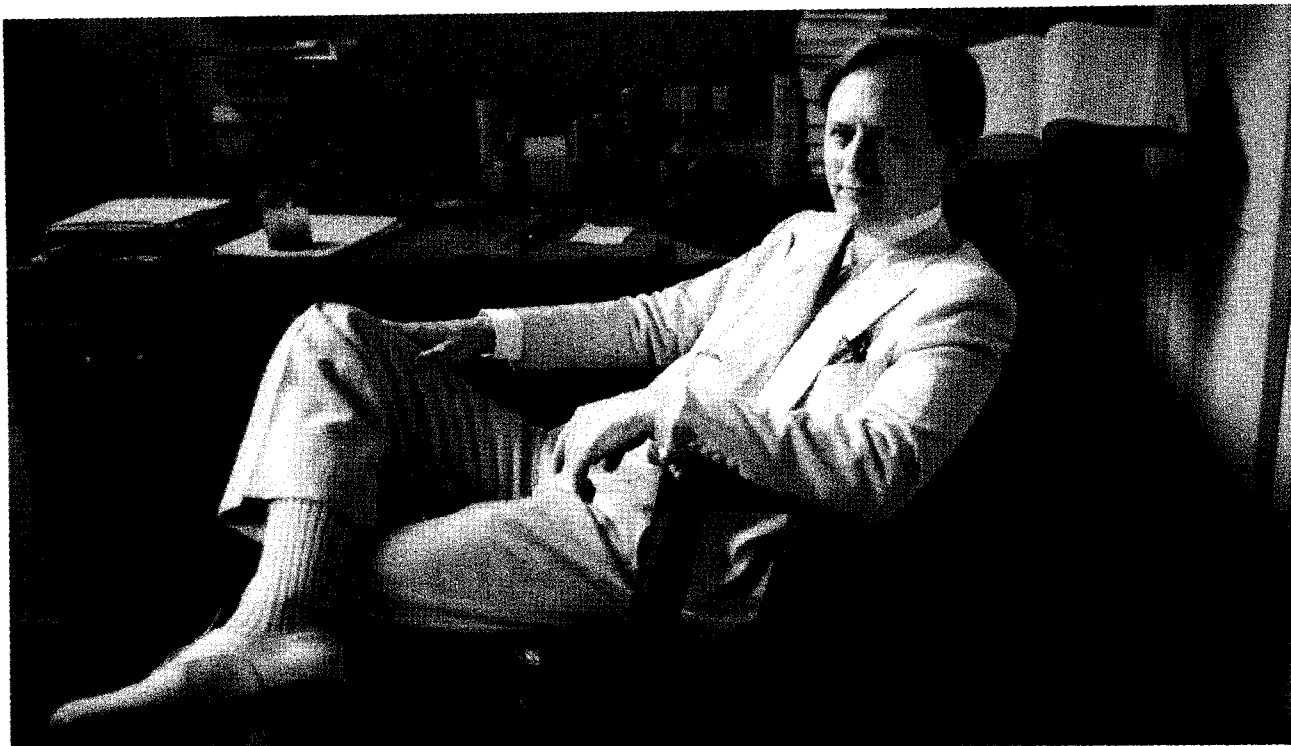
at the corrupt and youth-mad world around her, decides to break away from its conventions by disposing of the corpse. The police investigating the man's disappearance end up detaining a bar owner who recently served a prison term for murder. Although he is soon released, his business is ruined, and he sets out to wreak revenge on whoever let him take the rap.

Few writers would dare tell a story as amoral as this without either laying on the black humor or reassuringly blurring the line between reality and fantasy—by allowing us to doubt that there really *is* a corpse, say, or having Franz Kafka suddenly jump out of a sushi roll. But Kirino isn't fooling around, and if that makes her a "naturalist," which has become something of a term of opprobrium, then so be it. She does indeed recall Zola in many aspects: her careful description of factory work, her evocation of an entire society through a cross section of characters, the way she motivates her heroine without recourse to pat psychology.

And yet, Zola was never like this. Somehow *Out* succeeds in making us feel that Masako, who takes on more than one corpse, is not only doing nothing wrong but is acting more nobly than the law-abiding citizens around her. At the same time, and far more disquietingly, the novel wins from us a measure of sympathetic respect for the psychopath who is out to kill her. Putting the book down after the last chapter is like returning from a journey beyond good and evil—an exhilarating journey, even if one does feel glad to be back.

Stephen Snyder renders the original into just the right English, neither too formal nor too colloquial: "As she pedaled away, she noticed that the light shining through the umbrella turned the bare skin of her arms a brilliant rose pink." My only quibble is with that pretty young face on the paperback cover, which cruelly undermines everything our heroine cut up corpses for. Why not put a pretty fifty-ish face on the front, like Natsuo Kirino's own? Serial killers and Hollywood filmmakers will turn away with a yawn, but I don't want them reading this anyway. ▀

B. R. Myers is a contributing editor of The Atlantic and the author of A Reader's Manifesto.



BOOKS

Cry Wolfe

In defense of the last writer in the world who needs defending

BY MARK BOWDEN

In one of many deft set pieces in Tom Wolfe's *I Am Charlotte Simmons*, a group of student journalists at the fictional Dupont University hold a meeting in the "lumpen-bohemian clutter" of their campus newsroom. The editor wants a firm story list for the next issue's fast-approaching deadline, but the discussion bogs down over an item that might just be important breaking news—they're not sure.

It seems that the campus custodial staff cleaned from the quad sidewalks crude chalk depictions of homosexual acts. Camille Deng, a feisty arch-feminist and civil libertarian, is outraged by such heedless destruction of gay art. "Do you think it's just a coincidence that Parents Weekend is coming up?" she argues.

You think they might just possibly not want the parents to see descriptions of how Dupont guys make love written in chalk all over the sidewalks? "We're Queer and We're Here"—you think

Dupont Hall wants to let that big cat out of the bag? Because *they* are here.

Then another staffer, who is gay, turns on Deng's use of the word "they." "You sure you don't have an issue yourself?" he accuses her. "Like maybe a little covert pariah-ism? Like maybe a little self-loathing lesbianism?"

Their argument forms a perfect *ouroboros*, illustrating that the game of impugning motives (even subconscious ones) forms a self-destructive loop. It's a neat insight, and *I Am Charlotte Simmons* is full of such little gems, stabs at the rich variety of pseudo-intellectualism that flourishes on a college campus. It is above all a novel of ideas, a point perhaps obscured by the entertainment value of Wolfe's prose. In addition to being one of the most original stylists to ever write in the English language, Wolfe has long been America's most skillful satirist. In his first two novels, *The Bonfire of the Vanities* and *A Man in Full*, Wolfe lampooned the excesses of the nouveau riche, racial politics, the criminal-justice system, and other generally urban white-collar targets, all of which were widely considered fair game. In *Charlotte Simmons*, he takes aim at youth culture—at the children!

I AM CHARLOTTE
SIMMONS

by Tom Wolfe
Picador

Many young critics resented being made fun of by a septuagenarian in a fusty suit, and some dismissed Wolfe as a scold. Reviewers with children or students (or both) the same age as those in the novel reacted defensively. They stuck up for the modern student and the quality of thought at modern universities, and found Wolfe's take on campus life to be shallow, prudish, inaccurate, and unfair. "In the course of a very long 676 pages [Wolfe] serves up the revelation—yikes!—

that students crave sex and beer, love to party, wear casual clothes, and use four-letter words," wrote Michiko Kakutani, whose reviews in *The New York Times* are routinely parroted by critics

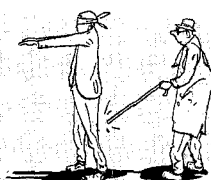
throughout the land. Daniel Mendelsohn in *The New York Review of Books* faulted Wolfe for losing his cool, for letting the fine contempt that fuels satire degrade into mere outrage that, the critic wrote, is "flaccid as social satire."

The assault this time out, I suspect, owes something to the contemptuous treatment Wolfe received a few years ago from several of his esteemed contemporaries—notably John Updike, Norman Mailer, and John Irving. Their attacks are best summed up in one deliciously bitchy sentence from Updike's otherwise

A CLOSE READ

What makes good writing good

BY CHRISTINA SCHWARZ



"Here was a man to be trusted. Here was a man with a handshake. A man who parted his graying dark hair razor-sharp on the left side of his scalp. For certain of his public appearances he wore makeup including inky-black mascara lightly brushed against his eyelashes. For their trips to Chester, Pennsylvania, to South Philly and Camden, New Jersey, he wore tinted glasses in stylish metal frames. He whistled, he was in good spirits. He rarely spoke of his week at the state capitol except to tell Philip that things were going very well. He did not inquire after Philip's mother or sister. He would have shaved just before picking Philip up at the Pennington Academy, Friday afternoon at 3:20 p.m. He smelled of after-shave and something sweet like vanilla."

—from **High Lonesome: Stories 1966–2006**, by Joyce Carol Oates (Ecco)

Oates is superb at suggesting the sinister. From the first bold, bald sentence here, the man is suspect. As anyone who's taken a freshman English class knows, when a writer unambiguously declares a character good, she generally means the opposite. Oates underscores her point with the sentence that follows, the near-identical structure with "handshake" in the place previously occupied by "trusted" signaling that the substance of this trustworthiness may consist merely of a symbol. Oates's details, while never overtly negative, further reveal the man's dubious nature. There is obvious vanity in his meticulous attention to his appearance, vanity and deception in his use of makeup and tinted glasses, and

downright creepiness in his application of mascara, which Oates emphasizes by lingering over its description. After all of this, his sweet scent seems designed to mask something rotten. The minuteness of these observations, along with the precision surrounding the pickup (a reminder that the story is from the point of view of the man's son, Philip)—the name of the school, the exact minute, the redundancy of "afternoon" and "p.m."—emphasize the man's contrasting vagueness concerning his work and his family. What interests this creep is something worth shaving for. What is he doing with his son in Chester, South Philly, and Camden?

Christina Schwarz is the author of the novels *Drowning Ruth* and *All Is Vanity*.

flattering *New Yorker* review of *A Man in Full*, in which the celebrated author and critic assessed Wolfe as a writer of "entertainment, not literature, even literature in a modest aspirant form." Thus did a high priest of the novel brand Wolfe a pretender, and grant dispensation to the herd to have at him.

Charlotte Simmons is a fat gray-and-green paperback now, and despite the assertion by *Slate* editor Jacob Weisberg, who wrote in *The New York Times* that Wolfe is fun but that no one ever rereads him, I recommend a second look. The book is brilliant, wicked, true, and, like everything Wolfe writes, thematically coherent, cunningly well plotted, and delightfully told.

Certainly one factor that elevates fiction from mere "entertainment" to even "modest aspirant" literature is substance. Is the book about something important?

Does it reward study? Is the author saying anything new? Is the work carefully crafted around a theme?

Wolfe opens the book by describing the experiment that earned Dupont psychologist Victor Starling a Nobel Prize: when a critical portion of a cat's brain was removed in the lab, the cat entered a "hypermanic" state of sexual arousal, which was then imitated by "control" cats that had not undergone the operation. "Starling," writes Wolfe, "had discovered that a strong social or 'cultural' atmosphere, even as abnormal as this one, could in time overwhelm the genetically determined responses of perfectly normal, healthy animals."

The experiment is, of course, an analogy for Wolfe's Dupont University, where the school's national champion basketball team is revered, and its players, all genetic freaks with, in effect, the

thinking portion of their brains removed (they are discouraged from taking real courses), enjoy a "hypermanic" sex life with the eager coeds who line their paths. They are the equivalent of Starling's surgically altered lab cats. Normal students—who observe the players on the court, on ESPN, and on campus, and imitate them—are the control group. Dupont, which Wolfe depicts as the nation's premier seat of higher learning, is in the thrall of jock values—sex, booze, drugs, and pursuit of the big post-college payday. One of Wolfe's early triumphs, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, ridiculed the pretensions of the hippie movement, and here, nearly two generations later, is the legacy of the Summer of Love: not an egalitarian free-love utopia but a repellent pit of sexual predation, where status is conferred by fucking.

Into this rampant promiscuity wanders beautiful, innocent, idealistic, painfully traditional Charlotte Simmons, a Candide-like scholarship student from the deep-backwoods town of Sparta, North Carolina, in search of the "life of the mind." Some of the novel's critics have complained that a naïf such as Charlotte in this day and age is implausible, but Charlotte is a construction, a device, one in a long and celebrated series of satirical vehicles in English literature, all the way back to Henry Fielding's Joseph Andrews. On the surface she is fragile, but underneath she is a warrior, a "Spartan." Charlotte is, by degrees, sucked into the campus culture. She is lured into the self-abnegating realm of Starling's neuroscience lab, which is guided by an extreme behaviorism that denies consciousness itself, and with it free will and morality. She is ravished and discarded by the novel's chief predator, and plunged into profound depression and confusion, only to rally and establish herself, mind and body. The novel's title, echoing Descartes, announces her triumph over Starling's behaviorism and the tawdry reality of Dupont. Mendelsohn completely misses the point when he describes Charlotte as having been, at the end of the book, "reduced by her own craving for 'acceptance' to being arm-candy for a famous college jock." Far from it: she has beaten back the hedonistic tide of peer pressure, escaped the soul-deadening

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pull of Starling's lab, and reasserted her selfhood and her moral bearings. She is said jock's girlfriend, a fact that marks her ascension to the top rung of social status on campus—always a prime Wolfian preoccupation—and she holds that distinction strictly on her own terms; she has restored the missing piece of her boyfriend's brain (turned him into a real student), and is, as Wolfe makes abundantly clear, the dominant partner in the relationship. In the distorted context of campus life, she rules. All this in her freshman year, no less.

Elaine Showalter in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, along with Mendelsohn and a few others, made the mistake of taking Wolfe's description of Dupont University too literally, and so felt the need to argue that real-life elite schools are better than that. But the novel's university, like Charlotte, is an exaggeration. Despite all his bluster about Zola and the importance of social realism, Wolfe is not, at heart, a realist. The New York of Sherman McCoy, the Atlanta of Charlie Croker, and the Dupont University of Charlotte Simmons are caricatures, not faithful portraits. With Dupont U., he projects the nightmarish—take his "rutrutrutrutrut," for instance—moral consequences of a philosophy that won't admit the existence of self, much less soul, and imagines one pure, intellectually honest character thrust into that dystopia. Poorly executed, a work of extended allegory like this comes off as stiff and excessively contrived; *I Am Charlotte Simmons* is so intricately imagined and carefully reported that it's no wonder the book is mistaken for social realism. It is indeed scary how close this story comes to the real world.

There are so many delicious moments: the socially ambitious nerd Adam tripping over his own cleverness trying to impress Charlotte with a long riff about "Bad-Ass Rhodies"; Jojo, the jock boyfriend, struggling to explain to a scornful history professor why there are words in his paper (written by Adam) that he cannot define; Wolfe's precise delineation of the subtle gradations of sarcasm and the now-universal Shit and Fuck patois; the uneasy alliance between black and white players on the basketball team, and the role of "Swimmies," marginally talented

players with good grades who help maintain the team's all-important academic standing. The supposed villain of this imagined world is Buster Roth, the basketball coach, who turns out to be the university's only admirable grown-up.

Of all the writers in the world, Tom Wolfe is the last to need defending. Beneath that pale, skinny, dandified exterior is a two-fisted brawler and committed self-promoter. In his long career, he has rhetorically stuck his thumb in the eye of *The New Yorker* (a history that lends Updike's appraisal a tincture of tit for tat), the New Left, hippies, Black Panthers, astronauts, architects, and artists, among many others, but his longest-running battle has been with the fashionable notion of the "serious" literary novel.

His first broadside against it was his famous 1973 "New Journalism" essay, in which he lamented the "otherworldly preciousness" of most modern novels. More and more, he wrote, they seemed to be written not for a general reading public but for other writers. The authors of such books, in their preoccupation with characters' internal lives, had turned their backs on the real story of their times, Wolfe argued, abandoning the kind of reporting and observation that had distinguished the great novels of the past and effectively ceding the turf to journalists like ... him! He didn't actually place the crown on his own head; the essay was an introduction to the collected works of other "literary" journalists. But Wolfe was already (as he well knew) the bright eminence of that pack, whose work, he proclaimed, had become the "main event" in the literary arts. Then, having planted his own flag on literature's peak, he abandoned the very form he had championed and started writing novels himself. In a celebrated 1989 essay, he anointed himself point man for "a battalion, a brigade, of Zolas," who would sally forth, notebooks and tape recorders in hand, to rescue fiction from its cul-de-sac of self-obsession and restore it to its central role in American life, chronicling the "lurid carnival" of modern existence.

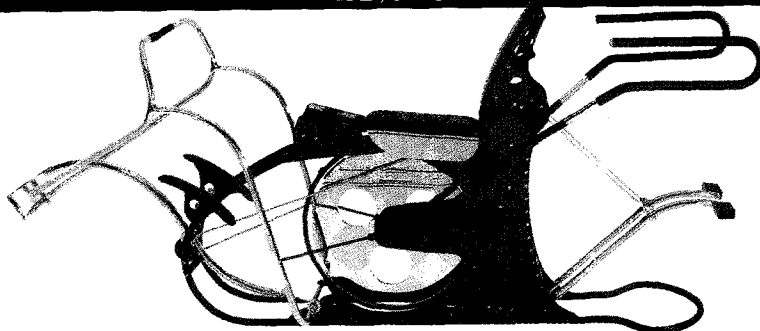
It matters a great deal to someone, I suppose, what kind of fiction commands

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NEW FICTION

Finds and flops

BY ELIZABETH JUDD

Satire is a risky enterprise—a writer who falters can abruptly become a target, worthy of spoofing. Wendy Wasserstein's zippy but ultimately disappointing lampoon of Manhattan's trendsetters opens immediately after 9/11, when her insulated characters, mainly women in their forties who've acquired Pilates-perfect bodies and other "yumbo" accoutrements, confront their burgeoning "security anxiety." Judy Tremont, Wasserstein's comic centerpiece, manages the threat of terrorism with trademark efficiency: she pops Ativan, sports a Fendi emergency kit full of Cipro, and wears lavish jewelry in case she must "trade it for easy passage off Manhattan." But Judy's deepest desire—entrée to society's A-list—eludes her until she finally befriends the preternaturally stylish Samantha Acton.

The Pulitzer Prize-winning Wasserstein, who died in January at age fifty-five, has written a play in novel's clothing, concocted from biting dialogue, endless costume changes, sight gags that probably would work better on stage, and the killing off of unwanted characters with Shakespearean dispatch. At the heart of Wasserstein's social critique lies the same intriguing paradox Henry James explored: those with old money, sophistication, and polish are attracted to the raw energy (the vulgarity, even) of society's nakedly aspiring climbers. Thus Samantha appreciates Judy's persistence, while Judy's ineffectual husband, Albert, delights in his daughter's acquisitiveness: "Charlotte wanted Prada and Juicy Couture with a passion that he had for very little, except maybe fine port."

Wasserstein stumbles when Frankie Weissman, an appealing pediatrician (and a double, one suspects, for the author), confesses a "sense of accomplishment that after thirty years she was finally invited to the cool girl's table." Any satirist who evokes the adolescent hierarchy with such dewy fondness veers dangerously close to self-parody. Wasserstein should best be remembered for her energetic early comedies, such as *Uncommon Women and Others*.

Elizabeth Judd is a writer in Washington, D.C.



ELEMENTS OF STYLE

by Wendy Wasserstein
Knopf

the peak of Mount Literature. History teaches us that such preferences change only slightly more slowly than hemlines, and many an author celebrated in his lifetime is barely remembered a decade after his last book. Much critical prestige today is accorded writers of "experimental," or "postmodern," fiction, who play clever games with language and traditional storytelling forms, and whose works are dazzlingly hard to follow. (If simple readability matters, these authors—even giants like Thomas Pynchon and William Gaddis—are the most likely candidates for obscurity.) A recent essay in *Harper's Magazine* in defense of experimental fiction, by the novelist Ben Marcus, set out to describe the ideal reader of such works:

[His or her] Wernicke's area [the portion of the brain presumed to process language] is staffed by an army of jumpsuited code-breakers, working a barn-size space that is strung about the rafters with a mathematically intricate lattice of rope and steel, and maybe gusseted by a synthetic coil that is stronger and more sensitive than either, like guitar strings made from an unraveled spinal cord, each strand tuned to different tensions.

It goes on. Marcus lost me at "code-breakers," though I was struck by his momentary indecision—the "maybe"—over whether to embellish this bizarre metaphor with his "synthetic coil." He concludes the long paragraph thusly:

My ideal reader would cough up a thimble of fine gray powder at the end of the reading session, and she could use this mineral-rich substance to compost her garden.

This is just silly. There will always be readers who enjoy "code-breaking," but I suspect great fiction is, and will always be, about language, story, characters, seriousness of purpose, and a coherent theme.

Wolfe scores for me in every category, most notably language. My own Wernicke's area has long thrilled to the surprising and inventive turns of his narration. It is a voice so distinctive that it has launched a thousand bad imitations, and it is the vibrant core of everything

Wolfe writes. His exuberant experiments in punctuation are easy to ridicule, but they are not just pointless display; they are an effort to harness on the page the velocity of his rhetoric, which runs full-throttle in a continual state of intellectual astonishment.

Wolfe began his career as a social scientist, and he has remained, first and foremost, a man the opposite of dumbstruck by the hilarious pageant of American life, whether he's revealing the vapid maunderings that pass for serious thought on a bus full of tripping hippies or demonstrating how the U.S. space program faithfully re-enacted—in modern times, on a massive scale—the ancient tribal ritual of single combat. One cannot imagine a Wolfe story without that voice, any more than one can convey the humor in *Tom Jones* without the voice of Fielding, or *Tristram Shandy* without that of Laurence Sterne.

So what makes fiction great? What is the standard? In his put-down of Wolfe, Updike didn't explain the difference between "entertainment" and "literature," other than to suggest that the dapper former journalist's writing was not "exquisite." According to *Webster's*, the word means "carefully selected" ... "marked by nice discrimination, deep sensitivity, or subtle understanding" ... "pleasing through beauty, fitness, or perfection." The put-down invites a comparison between Wolfe's writing and Updike's own. I admire Updike's books, although I have read only a small portion of his prodigious output. *Couples*, *Villages*, and the *Rabbit* series in particular are intensely realistic, and capture better than anything the texture of American suburban life and the subtle transactions of emotional and sexual need in modern relationships. But his books run together in my mind. They all have a similar feel, and as engrossing and exquisitely written as they are, I find I have a hard time remembering them afterward. In the long run, fiction that endures is by definition memorable.

By that standard, my money is on Wolfe. ▀

Mark Bowden is a national correspondent of *The Atlantic*.

Found in Translation?

A new version of War and Peace seeks naturalism through slang—a questionable tack with a book whose originality is not its language

BY MONA SIMPSON

There is a new translation of *War and Peace*. Why? Even Anthony Briggs, its latest translator, tells us that this novel “has been well served by its several [his word: there have been at least nine] translators into English.” Briggs doesn’t mention Huntington Smith, who in 1899 abridged the novel, divided it into two sections (one for stories, one for essays), and renamed it *The Physiology of War*. But he does a pretty thorough accounting, singling out Louise and Aylmer Maude as “the masters,” and he quotes Tolstoy’s own assessment of their work: “Better translators ... could not be invented.”

So, why do we need another translation?

Briggs’s own answer seems evasive and bizarre. He mentions the obvious clearing up of little anachronisms that we’d expect in the first new translation in nearly forty years (the changing of “gay” when it’s used to mean “merry,” for instance), but then goes on to criticize previous translations for a certain prissiness, which he attributes to the fact that most of the translators were women of a “particular social and cultural background.” He proposes to make the dialogue more naturalistic, especially that among “soldiers, peasants, and all the lower orders.” (Giving the benefit of the doubt, I suppose we can presume Briggs to have had some experience with soldiers. But as for peasants and all the lower orders, one wonders whether he intends his gender or his social class to be the ticket.)

In reading this book, however, one is struck by how far one must go (more than 100 pages) before running into

any patch of dialogue involving soldiers or the lower orders. Indeed, not only have the novel’s English-language translators been women of a certain class; the book itself is a novel of a certain class. It is unabashedly concerned with the very oldest Russian families.

Perhaps that is one of the secrets of its popularity: phenomenally rich, aristocratic people are always easier to take in translation, in a far-off country, and when long dead. The characters

in *War and Peace* lived 200 years ago—Tolstoy was writing about his grandparents’ generation. He himself came from a family older than the czar’s.

It is a novel replete with the machinations of people trying to divert fortunes to their children, but all the money troubles are those of ancient families struggling to keep the life they’ve always lived, with its balls and name-day sit-down dinners for eighty. (The young characters ride in sleighs between dachas over the legendary Russian snow while their parents stay home worrying about money, as if prosperity, with all its glamour, were a show, presented generation after generation, for the benefit of the children.) There’s not one central character in the book who belongs to the lower orders. (Even the German tutor, a longtime favorite of mine, who so ardently wishes to memo-

rize every course in order to write home to his people recording every dish and every wine served at the Rostovs’ great dinner, can hardly be called a peasant.) The novel has its share of widowed noblewomen in need of money, but their speech can’t be expected to differ from that of their luckier friends, whose husbands are still alive.

As for soldiers, it is a question of taste whether you would prefer a Russian general in Austria in 1805 to be looking for excuses to “blow his top,” as Briggs portrays him, or would just as soon have your general wishing to find “a further excuse for wrath,” as Louise and Aylmer Maude delicately put it.

Here is an exchange at the front, presumably among the “lower orders” (italics mine):

“Who was it said Kutuzov’s blind in one eye?”

“Well, he is. Blind as they come.”

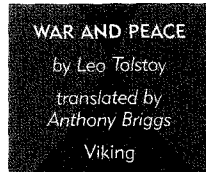
“Nay, boys, he’s got better eyes than you. Soon spotted our boots and leg-bands, didn’t he?”

“Listen, *mate*, when he looked at my legs ... *I says to myself ...*”

“And what about that Austrian *bloke* with him—looked like they’d chalked him all over. White as flour. I bet *they strips him* down and cleans him like *we does* the guns.”

And:

“Wasn’t it great when *them Germans* gave us a lift in their carts! Got a move on then, didn’t we?”

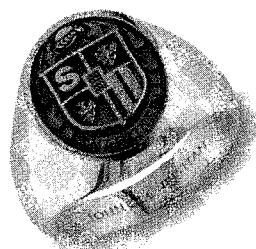


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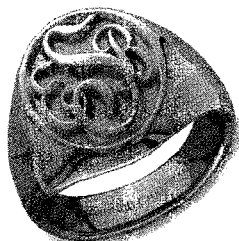
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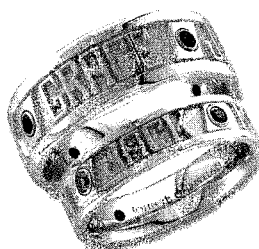
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"But listen, boys, *the folks round here be a weird lot*. Up to now it's been all Poles and *suchlike*, all under the Russian crown, from now on it's all Germans, *me boy*."

You get the drift. Here are the same lines in the Maudes' translation:

"And they said Kutuzov was blind of one eye?"

"And so he is! Quite blind!"

"No, friend, he is sharper-eyed than you are. Boots and leg bands ... he noticed everything ..."

"When he looked at my feet, friend ... well, thinks I ..."

"And that other one with him, the Austrian, looked as if he were smeared with chalk—as white as flour! I suppose they polish him up as they do the guns."

And:

"Wasn't it fine when those Germans gave us lifts? You just sit still and are drawn along."

"And here, friend, the people are quite beggarly. There they all seemed to be Poles—all under the Russian crown—but here they're all regular Germans."

It's certainly true that the Russian troops were unlikely to sound as they do in the Maudes' dialogue ("Wasn't it fine ..."). And yet, Briggs's version risks sounding like a child's pirate movie made by Australians. His penchant for spoken language, I trust, encouraged him to transliterate a German colonel so that the officer's speech reads like parody ("Ze reason vy, my goot sir," he said, in his German accent, "eez just zat ze Emperor knows zis too"), reminiscent of "So they call me Concentration Camp Erhardt," in Ernst Lubitsch's great *To Be or Not to Be*.

For what it's worth, Rosemary Edmonds and the Maudes also transliterated the colonel's speech, and Edmonds made attempts at bawdiness among the soldiers, albeit tamer ones. Constance Garnett was satisfied to mention that the colonel was speaking with a German accent. I prefer the graceful, more smoothed-out "written" English, but some readers might enjoy the rowdier attempts at dialect. Nonetheless, I find it charmingly hilarious that a translator will work through a 1,358-page book with the hope that the insertion of

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slang will bring the novel he's long loved to new mass audiences. It seems a case of the academic who wishes to be writing screenplays.

Novelists usually refine a book through many drafts, often devoting a whole pass to one element; I've spent weeks charting the money made and sent home by a single character, and devoted months to tangled chronology. (Tolstoy's chronology in *War and Peace* could use a few months of straightening out.) Translations may work this way too; each good one gives us another element of the original, a strand, however fine, that wasn't visible to us in English before. The strand that Briggs is particularly sensitive to in Tolstoy's work is the great variety of spoken language within the book.

When *War and Peace* was first published, much of it was in French. Tolstoy virtually "translated" those passages into Russian for his 1873 edition. (That edition represented the book's fourth life in print; it came out initially in installments, and in book form it was originally a thirty-eight-chapter work titled *1805*.) In fact, French was used so widely in the first edition that a renowned Soviet linguist called it a bilingual work.

And yet, if it is a bilingual novel (it certainly is a novel about a bilingual culture), the previous translations don't convey that as definitely and easily as this one does. Briggs has developed a swingy, natural way of describing how characters go from French to Russian, depending on the circumstances, and he comments on the tone of their French, using the quality of their language as another way of suggesting qualities of character.

That being said, I still prefer the Maudes' translation. But either way, Tolstoy is one of the most translation-proof writers, because his originality lies not in language (at least not for the reader in English; in all the available translations it's fairly standard), nor in theme (he sticks to the big-ticket eternal: Life, Death, Love), but in character and in the intricacy and contrapuntal symmetry of his plots.

Characters in fiction are said to be "real" and "life-like" when they contain many contradictory qualities but still

READING LIST

CULT CLASSICS

Edifying or entertaining sacred texts you've never read

BY PHILIP JENKINS

Aradia, the Gospel of the Witches, by Charles Godfrey Leland (1899). Leland was researching Tuscan folklore when a woman named Maddelena gave him a handwritten copy of the supposed gospel of an ancient pagan religion reportedly still surviving underground in Christian Italy. The gospel tells the myths of the goddess Diana and her daughter Aradia (Herodias), and describes a whole spirit world of fairies and goblins, even offering practical advice about holding a witches' sabbat. Whatever its origins, it is a major source of later claims that witchcraft represents a genuinely ancient religious faith, making *Aradia* the great-grandmother of modern neo-paganism. Fans of *The Da Vinci Code* will be delighted to discover yet another religion in which a woman named Magdalene plays a critical apostolic role.

The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ, by Levi H. Dowling (1907). Dowling, an Ohio-born doctor and pastor, claimed to access the whole truth of Jesus of Nazareth's mission through a kind of channeling. *The Aquarian Gospel* records Jesus' extensive pilgrimages, through western India and Persia, Greece and Egypt, during which he taught the universal truth of human divinity, realized gradually through a process of repeated rebirth. Dowling's work helped establish the popular New Age notion of Jesus as a displaced guru, who must have at least visited Tibet.

The Urantia Book (1955). If *The Aquarian Gospel* still bears some vague resemblance to the New Testament, *The Urantia Book* reads like a mix of William Blake's visions, Mark Twain's *Letters From the Earth*, and an astronomy textbook. This 2,000-page behemoth was channeled over a period of several years in the 1920s and 1930s, and compiled under the guidance of a Chicago doctor named William S. Sadler. It chronicles the past few hundred million years of geologic and evolutionary change on the planet Urantia, also known as Earth, culminat-

ing in the reincarnation of a spiritual leader we call Jesus. Bizarre, obsessive, and occasionally stunning.

The Necronomicon (date uncertain). The 1920s horror writer H. P. Lovecraft made no pretense about the sources for the ancient lore with which he peppered his stories: he got most of it from the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Yet so convincingly did he depict the entirely invented occult texts in his books that many later writers have tried to find them and, when that failed, to reverse-engineer them. The greatest Lovecraftian pseudotext was the sinister *Necronomicon* ("the law of the dead"), reportedly put into its known form by Abdul Alhazred in the eighth century A.D. Among its most cited lines: "That is not dead which can eternal lie / And with strange aeons even death may die." Since the 1970s, several quite separate editions have been published, drawing variously on ancient Babylonian mythology and on Renaissance occultism; commentaries also exist. None, obviously, is authentic—although, as postmodern scholars of religion like to remind us, the concept of "authenticity" can be rather shaky when applied to anyone's scriptures.

Philip Jenkins is the author of *Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America*.

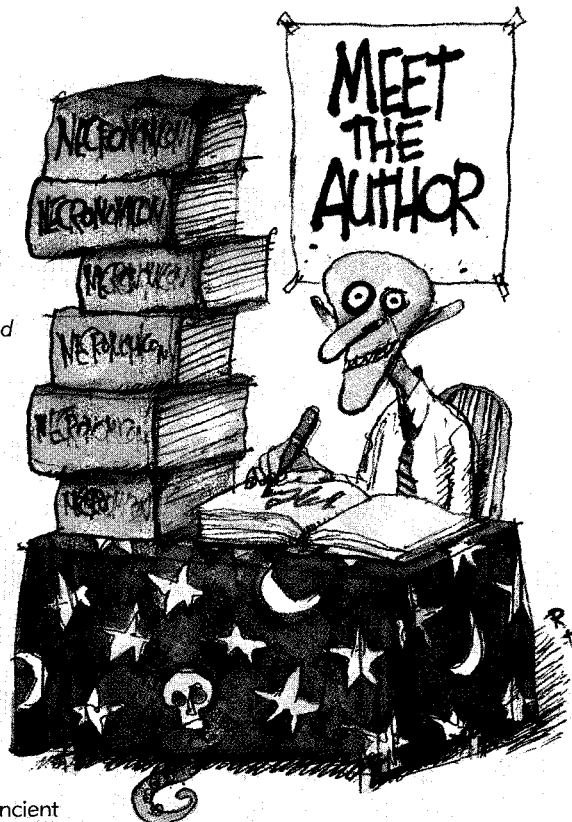


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cohere. Of course, most writers understand that the variety of contradictory detail in even a particularly boring human being, transposed to the page, would fail to be believable as that of one person. Like Austen (and unlike George Eliot or Proust), Tolstoy writes fairy tales, but his have jagged, realistic endings. His irony is fonder; he likes people more than Austen does. Girls whom Austen and Eliot would render as twits emerge in Tolstoy's work as full, complex characters, even with the abundant evidence of their spoiled immaturity.

Consider the Countess Rostov, whose husband has, by no evil greater than living the big life they were each brought up to expect, run through his family fortune. Austen would have made the woman—who schemes for her son to marry an heiress—a doddering fool. Eliot would have done worse. But Tolstoy first shows us the countess (who has had twelve children) slipping money to her impoverished, widowed childhood friend.

Anna Mikhaylovna's arms were round her. She was weeping, and the countess wept too. They wept for their friendship, their kindheartedness and the unfortunate need for lifelong friends to soil their hands with anything as sordid as money, and they wept also for their lost youth ... But the tears of both women were sweet ...

This is our introduction to the woman who later calls her niece, the girl her son loves, a "scheming hussy." It is a lovely passage, not for any play of language but for its capacious empathy, the narrator's description of the women's sorrow skipping, like a well-thrown stone on the surface of a lake, from the emotional burden of charity between old friends to their tearful nostalgia for days gone by. Nabokov (who remembered his father stopping to shake hands with a man and then saying, "That was Tolstoy") ranked him as the greatest Russian writer of prose fiction, though he admitted that he could not really account for the hows and whys of the writer's genius. "When you read Turgenev, you know you are reading Turgenev," Nabokov wrote. "When you read Tolstoy, you read just because you cannot stop." ^A

Mona Simpson is the author of four novels, including Anywhere But Here and Off Keck Road.

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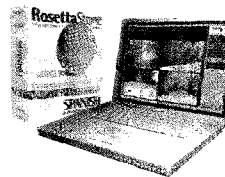
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Cover to Cover

A guide to current releases

BY BENJAMIN HEALY AND BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

A denotes a book reviewed in this issue

CURRENT AFFAIRS

The Disposable American

by Louis Uchitelle (Knopf)

Layoffs were supposed to help struggling American companies adjust to a changing world. One catch: they've permanently damaged job security, sparked ill-advised mergers, and eroded unions, health care, and pensions—while failing to solve the problems they were meant to address in the first place.

America at the Crossroads

by Francis Fukuyama (Yale)

Mugged by reality in Iraq, a prominent neocon breaks with his ideological allies, counseling greater respect for supranational institutions. Having shed the "neoconservative" tag, he pithily declares himself a "realistic Wilsonian."

California

by Peter Schrag (California)

The Golden State is still beset by demographic, cultural, and economic complexity.

American Ally

by Con Coughlin (Ecco)

A British journalist's in-depth assessment of Tony Blair's relationship with George W. Bush during the war on terror yields a verdict somewhere near the middle of the lapdog-lone wolf spectrum.

American Theocracy

by Kevin Phillips (Viking)

The oracle of the emerging Republican majority examines the fruits of his prophecy and further predicts that an overreliance on oil, excessive debt, and the politicization of religion will lead America to certain doom.

A Barrier

by Isabel Kershner (Palgrave)

A look at life on both sides of the wall being built between Israel and the West Bank.

U.S. HISTORY

A Nation Among Nations

by Thomas Bender (Hill and Wang)

Taking exception to exceptionalism, the author argues that the American Revolution was but a sideshow in a long-running French-British grudge match, and that the Civil War was just another eruption of mid-nineteenth-century restlessness in the mold of the European revolutions of 1848.

The Divided Ground

by Alan Taylor (Knopf)

A narrative account of the settling of the northern border of what would become the United States. The Indians thought they could preserve some of their land by leasing rather than selling it to the newcomers. The colonists disagreed.

A Upon the Altar of the Nation

by Harry S. Stout (Viking)

A religious historian asks, Was the Civil War justly fought?

31 Days

by Barry Werth (Nan A. Talese/Doubleday)

A painstaking reconstruction of the period between Richard Nixon's resignation, in August of 1974, and his pardon a month later. Never has the Ford administration seemed so gripping.

WORLD HISTORY

The Great Wall

by Julia Lovell (Grove/Atlantic)

A history of the literal and figurative walls that China has raised between itself and the outside world over the past three millennia.

Ireland

by Gustave de Beaumont (Harvard)

Nineteenth-century Ireland gets the Tocqueville treatment.

Mussolini's Italy

by R. J. B. Bosworth (Penguin Press)

A leading Mussolini biographer describes how Italians' traditional bonds of tribe and family made Fascism slightly less

de facto totalitarian than Nazism. Cold comfort, but still.

A Scars of War, Wounds of Peace

by Shlomo Ben-Ami (Oxford)

A history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, written by a former Israeli foreign-affairs minister.

BIOGRAPHY

Tamerlane: Sword of Islam, Conqueror of the World

by Justin Marozzi (Da Capo)

A British journalist retraces the conquering footsteps of Genghis Khan's successor. After seizing Baghdad, Tamerlane's men built a pyramid using the heads of 90,000 of his enemies—the fifteenth-century version of shock and awe.

Trickster Travels

by Natalie Zemon Davis (FSG)

The exhausting tale of al-Hasan al-Wazzan: born in Spain, captured by pirates, and forcibly converted to Christianity, he won fame as Leo Africanus after publishing the first geography of Africa to appear in Europe.

The Life of Benjamin Franklin: Journalist, 1706–1730 and Printer and Publisher, 1730–1747

by J. A. Leo Lemay (Pennsylvania)

The first two installments of a projected seven-volume biography of one of the portlier Founding Fathers.

Anna of All the Russias

by Elaine Feinstein (Knopf)

A biography of Anna Akhmatova, who was born under the czar, suffered under Stalin, and died under Brezhnev, yet maintained a poetic sensibility throughout.

Louis Armstrong's New Orleans

by Thomas Brothers (Norton)

Armstrong moved away from New Orleans as a young man, but not before the city's social and cultural complexities had left an indelible mark.

At Canaan's Edge

by Taylor Branch (Simon & Schuster)

The third volume of Branch's magisterial biography of Martin Luther King Jr. stretches from "Bloody Sunday" in Selma to King's assassination, in Memphis, three years later.

A Fever

by Peter Richmond (Holt)

A biography of Peggy Lee.

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

Creators

by Paul Johnson (HarperCollins)

The second installment of a projected trilogy—the first being the same author's *Intellectuals*—probes the hidden mechanism of human creativity, turning to Chaucer, Austen, Bach, and Disney for insight.

Manliness

by Harvey C. Mansfield (Yale)

What can Achilles, Hemingway, and Margaret Thatcher teach us about manliness? A meditation on the subject by the noted Harvard philosopher.

Flapper

by Joshua Zeitz (Crown)

A cultural history of the original girls gone wild.

American Green

by Ted Steinberg (Norton)

Our yearly lawn-care expenditure rivals Iceland's GDP, and over the past several years, nearly as many Americans have been injured by lawn mowers as by handguns. A look at the dark side of the American lawn.

To Hate Like This Is to Be Happy Forever

by Will Blythe (HarperCollins)

A sort of *Iliad* for the Duke–North Carolina college basketball rivalry, written by the former literary editor of *Esquire*.

Chances Are ... : Adventures in Probability

by Michael and Ellen Kaplan (Viking)

A reflection on life's contingencies and the mathematical underpinnings thereof.

RELIGION

The Great Transformation

by Karen Armstrong (Knopf)

Whatever else Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Judaism, and Greek rationalism may not share, they're all roughly the same age, dating to the ninth century B.C. A leading chronicler of world religions explicates their common bonds.

A Church in Search of Itself

by Robert Blair Kaiser (Knopf)

A survey of the Benedict-era Catholic Church by *Newsweek*'s man in the Vatican, built around profiles of six cardinals from five different continents.

NOVELS AND SHORT STORIES

High Lonesome: Stories 1966–2006

by Joyce Carol Oates (Ecco)

Eleven of the stories in this new collection appear in book form for the first time.

Daniel Isn't Talking

by Marti Leimbach

(Nan A. Talese/Doubleday)

A young mother attempts to treat her child's autism in this novel based loosely on the author's personal experience.

The Night Watch

by Sarah Waters (Riverhead)

Four Londoners navigate their war-torn city in a novel narrated backward from 1947 to 1941.

Second Honeymoon

by Joanna Trollope (Bloomsbury)

A middle-aged Englishwoman adjusting to empty-nest status faces the return of her adult children, pre-empting the activities suggested by the title.

Elements of Style

by Wendy Wasserstein (Knopf)

A posthumously published novel by the celebrated playwright.

Abide With Me

by Elizabeth Strout (Random House)

The second novel from the author of *Amy and Isabelle*.

War and Peace

by Leo Tolstoy (Viking)

A new translation by Anthony Briggs.

The Rules of Perspective

by Adam Thorpe (Holt)

In this novel set in the waning months of World War II, the narration shifts between a German curator and an American GI who discovers a masterpiece in the rubble of a bombed-out museum.

What Caroline Knew

by Caryn James (St. Martin's)

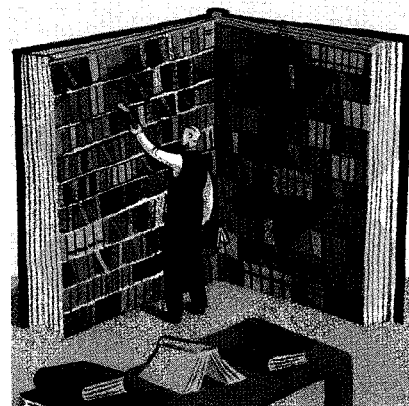
Elsewhere on the lost-painting beat, a bohemian socialite is shaken by scandal after an erotic portrait of her is unveiled at an exhibition.

MYSTERY AND SUSPENSE

False Impression

by Jeffrey Archer (St. Martin's)

A murder on the eve of 9/11 sparks a globe-spanning search for—what else?—a priceless Van Gogh.



Brandenburg Gate

by Henry Porter (Grove/Atlantic)

In the last days of divided Berlin, a Stasi-agent-turned-art-scholar runs from his cloak-and-dagger past, fending off entreaties from British intelligence and the CIA.

Dirty Blonde

by Lisa Scottoline (HarperCollins)

A federal judge finds her secret sex life infringing on her caseload.

End of Story

by Peter Abrahams (William Morrow)

A creative-writing class in a maximum-security prison becomes a crucible for intrigue.

Fiddlers

by Ed McBain (Harcourt)

In the fifty-fifth (and final) book in the late McBain's 87th Precinct series, the shooting of a blind violinist launches a manhunt for a serial killer.

Blue Shoes and Happiness

by Alexander McCall Smith (Pantheon)

In the latest installment of the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency series, Precious Ramotswe takes on a wayward cobra and faulty blood-pressure readings against the usual Botswanan backdrop.

City of Tiny Lights

by Patrick Neate (Riverhead)

A Ugandan-Indian detective (and former Afghan mujahid) searches for a missing Russian prostitute in contemporary London.

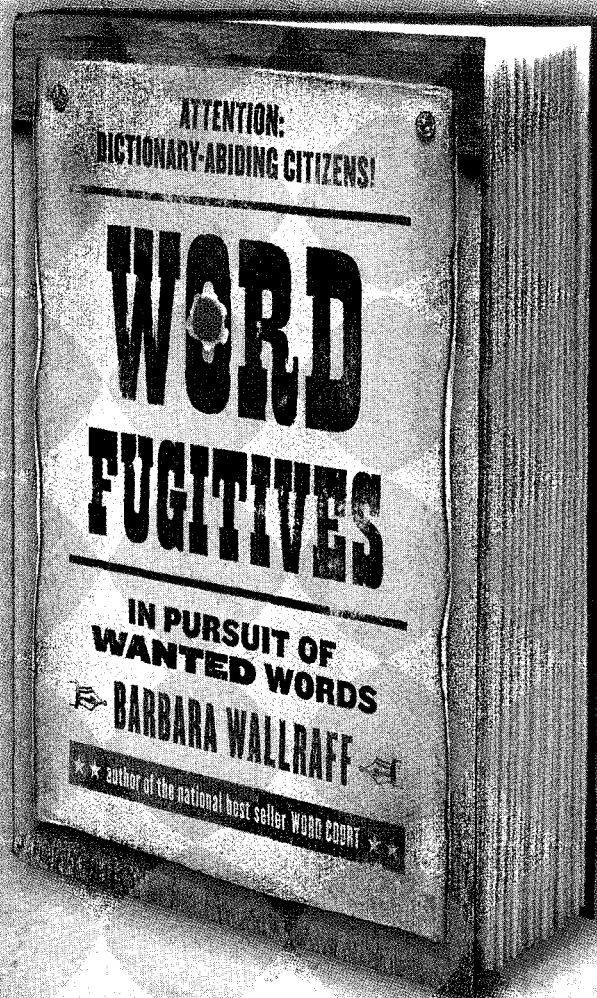
Nightlife

by Thomas Perry (Random House)

A Portland, Oregon, homicide detective hunts a female serial killer who changes identities as casually as she dispatches her victims.

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ROGER COULAM

TRAVELS

Empire's End

Hadrian's Wall, which demarked Roman Britain's northern boundary, still marches across the rugged landscape—and through the mists of time

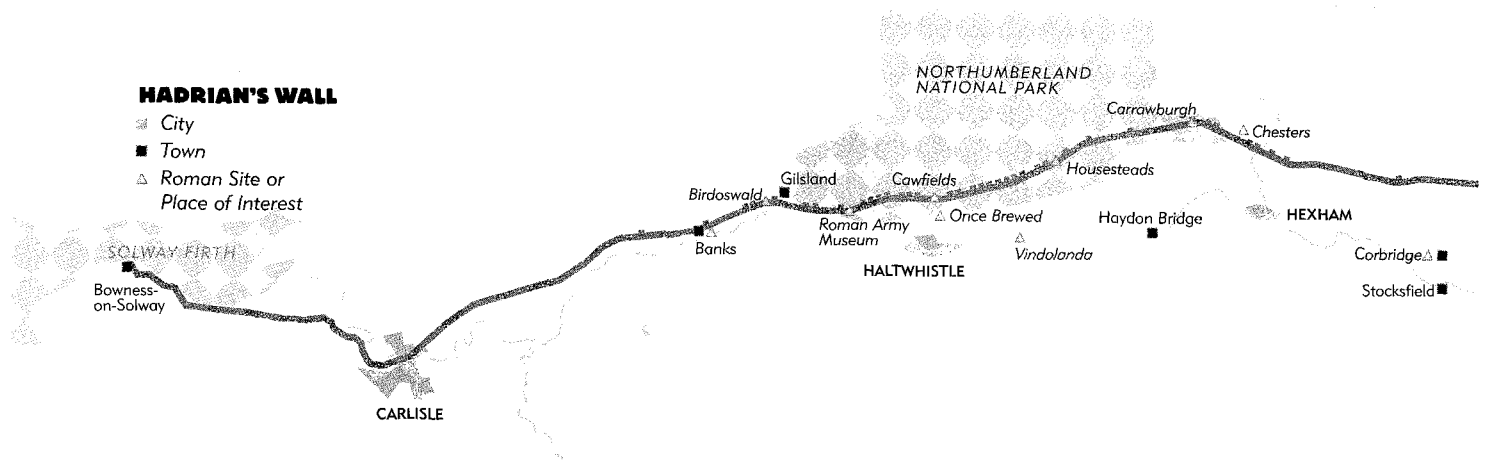
BY CULLEN MURPHY

There is no mystery about the origin of my romance with Hadrian's Wall. I can trace it exactly to a September morning when, as a thirteen-year-old schoolboy in Ireland, I cracked open my new *Third Year Latin* textbook and came across a color photograph of

the massive fortification that crosses the landscape of northern England. The picture showed the wall in winter, dusted with snow, relentlessly marching up crags and down defiles, until it disappeared into a horizon beyond time. The wall, I read, had been built at

the command of the Emperor Hadrian, beginning around 120 A.D., to delineate the boundary between Roman Britain and the barbarian hinterland to the north. It stretched seventy-five miles from the mouth of the Tyne, on the east, to the Solway Firth, on the west, with a fortified gateway at every mile and a pair of turrets between each pair of milecastles. Every manned point was visible to two others.

In one of those reinforcing coincidences that can fix a memory for all time, soon after seeing that textbook photograph I came across a copy of



Rudyard Kipling's book *Puck of Pook's Hill*, which contains this evocation of what it might have been like for a Roman legionnaire arriving at the northern British frontier for the first time:

The hard road goes on and on—and the wind sings through your helmet-plume—past altars to Legions and Generals forgotten ...

Just when you think you are at the world's end, you see the smoke from East to West as far as the eye can turn, and then, under it, also as far as the eye can stretch ... one long, low, rising and falling, and hiding and showing line of towers. And that is the wall!

Reading those words, I feel a rush of excitement even now, and involuntarily pull an imaginary cloak a little tighter around my shoulders.

That first encounter with Hadrian's Wall was in 1965. Next I knew, quite suddenly, forty years had elapsed, and still I had come no closer to the thing itself than the words and images on a page. Last December, hoping to catch the wall in all its wintry bluster, and with the advantage of boots and textiles a legionnaire could only envy, I resolved to put matters aright.

There is always a worry that the buildup will overwhelm the reality. In the case of Hadrian's Wall, the worry is not warranted in the least. To be sure, the wall has been dismantled in many places, as people nearby, over a period of fifteen centuries, used its expertly cut stones, each the size of a loaf of bread, to build homes and churches—making Hadrian's Wall the first Home Depot. And even in the best-preserved stretches it is now about five feet high

(and about six feet thick), rather than the ten feet high of Hadrian's time. But no matter. My first view came on a ridge a little north of the old Roman camp at Vindolanda. A bend in the road, and there it was: a curvaceous bulwark running east, up and down and up and down, along the beetle-browed High-shield Crag and Sewingshield Crag, like some painted backdrop that seems to announce that it can't be real.

A hiking path runs coast to coast along the course of the wall. All told, I walked twenty miles in the well-preserved center section, where visitors will most likely want to concentrate. It can be tough going: the wall is no respecter of terrain, and the open countryside of Northumbria is brutally exposed to the elements. The tall grass along the trail crunched satisfyingly under foot when I was there, because it was frozen. The shadows and swales held snow. This far north the sun sets

Wall all but scream, "Not winter!" But I was not the only one seduced by the austere boreal charms of the trail in mid-December; I counted seventeen others. (A minor demographic note: this is a place where someone with red hair and ruddy cheeks could really get lost in a crowd, if there was one.)

Northumbria was a military zone, and, leaving aside the wall itself, signs of the Roman presence are everywhere. A major Roman road, now called the Stanegate, runs east to west, straight as a rule. One glance at a 1:25,000 ordnance map shows rectangular Roman encampments, some excavated and some not, every few inches. One of the most extensive of these forts is Vercovicium (now known as Housesteads), where there is also a small museum.

Vercovicium's northern edge is part of the wall, making the fort an excellent access point for a longer walk along the wall trail. A few miles due south is

**A bend in the road, and there it was:
a curvaceous bulwark running east,
up and down and up and down,
like some painted backdrop that
seems to announce it can't be real.**

early in wintertime—technically, around 3:00 p.m.—but in truth, sunset heralds two hours of dusky purple and orange in the western sky, above a serrated landscape visible to a range of thirty miles. And the low sun brings into sharp relief the system of defensive trenches and earthworks that parallel the wall on both sides. Ranking seasons by desirability, the official guides to Hadrian's

Vindolanda, which was a flourishing Roman base decades before Hadrian's Wall was even contemplated. It's also the site of major ongoing excavations by members of the archaeological Birley family, who have been working there since the 1930s. The underground muck at Vindolanda has created anaerobic conditions and kept artifacts, including hundreds of

addon-
the-Wall

NEWCASTLE
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Wallsend

documents, in an astonishing state of preservation. The first piece of Latin writing in the Western world known to have come from a woman's hand was pulled from the trenches there. (It's an invitation to a birthday party.)

Seeking a break one morning from the otherwise companionable drizzle and wind, I sat down for an hour with Robin Birley (the son of the late archaeologist Eric and the father and father-in-law, respectively, of the archaeologists Andrew and Barbara), a large man of sixty-five with hands like oaken burls. He had shown me around the compact but highly professional and rewarding museum at Vindolanda; now he explained how the delicate documents and other objects are conserved, throwing up his hands at the sheer volume of material coming out of the ground. "The Romans were here for more than three hundred years," he said, "and all that time, they were throwing things into the ditches. Up in the attic, we have five thousand boots and shoes."

Birley noted that the Romans were not particularly concerned with winning the hearts and minds of the locals. One document refers to the *Brittunculi*—"In linguistic terms," he said, "that's known as a 'patronizing diminutive.' Or insult." Only about 12 percent of Vindolanda has been excavated so far, and given that most of the work has to be done during the drier summer months, there's perhaps another 100 or 150 years to go. You never know what you're going to find when you open the ground, Birley said philosophically, and then amended himself: "Except boots and shoes."

The region that styles itself "Hadrian's Wall Country" lies about two and a half hours by car south of

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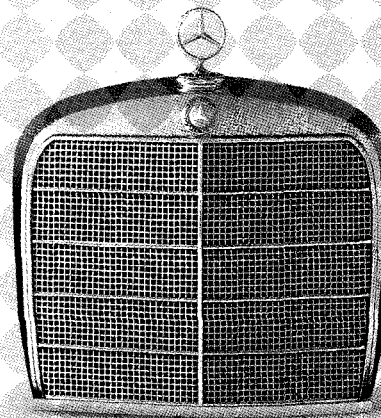
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WHAT TO DO AND WHERE TO STAY

Start your trip to the midsection of Hadrian's Wall by visiting **Hexham Abbey**, built by the Benedictine bishop Wilfrid of York around 675 A.D. The structure visible today dates mainly from the twelfth century, when the abbey became an Augustinian priory. However, visitors can still descend to Wilfrid's crypt, made of stones quarried by Roman soldiers centuries before.

Hexham Abbey

Hexham, Northumberland
NE46 3NB England
011 44 1434 602031
www.hexhamabbey.org.uk

Proceed west from Hexham to **Housesteads**, **Vindolanda**, and the information center **Once Brewed**. For an up-close tour of the region's varied geology, walk the seven-and-a-half-mile loop connecting them. You'll traverse boggy wetlands and the magma-formed crags of the Whin Sill. Or make separate trips to the sites, each of which merits a visit lasting several hours.

Housesteads (also known by its Roman name, **Vercovicium**) is one of the best-preserved Roman forts in Britain and the only place where you are allowed to walk on a portion of the original wall. The remains of barracks for 800 soldiers, a commanding officer's house, a granary, and a hospital are still discernible. You can even see how the plumbing of the latrines worked. A visit to the fort's museum provides a fuller picture of these buildings and of the life of a typical soldier garrisoned at the fort. (Housesteads, like many attractions along the wall, has limited hours during the winter, so be sure to check in advance.)

Housesteads Roman Fort and Museum

Bardon Mill, Hexham,
Northumberland
NE47 6NN England
011 44 1434 344363
<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-vh/w-visits/w-findaplace/w-hadrianswallandhousesteadsfort>

At **Vindolanda** archaeological excavations are in progress during much of the year. The ink-on-wood tablets discovered here, dating from 90 to 120 A.D., hold a wealth of information about both the lives of the fort's Roman soldiers and those of the Britons who lived in the neighboring vicus, or civilian settlement. Although most of the tablets are now

in the British Museum, photographs of them are always on view at the museum here. The authors were concerned with a variety of subjects: one refers in passing to the *Brittunculi* ("wretched Britons"); another quotes Virgil.

Roman Vindolanda

Bardon Mill, Hexham,
Northumberland
NE47 7JN England
011 44 1434 344277
www.vindolanda.com

The **Once Brewed Visitor Centre** reportedly takes its name from a request made by one Lady Trevelyan, who in the early 1930s paid a visit to a newly opened youth hostel on the site. Perhaps aware of the reputation of the neighboring Twice Brewed Inn (where, one version of the story has it, a group of boisterous soldiers found the ale too weak for their liking and demanded it be brewed again), she asked for nothing stronger than tea brewed "only once."

Once Brewed Visitor Centre

Northumberland National Park,
Military Road
Bardon Mill, Hexham,
Northumberland
NE47 7AN England
011 44 1434 344396
www.northumberland-national-park.org.uk

The region contains varied lodging options, from secluded **bed and breakfasts** to centrally located **hotels** in nearby towns, including Hexham and **Haltwhistle**.

The **Langley Castle Hotel** is a particularly memorable place to stay. Built in the fourteenth century, the castle has eighteen guest rooms, some with exposed stone walls and canopy beds. Most rooms are named for a historical figure or place associated with the castle. Guests with a literary bent may want to request the Percy Room; it is named for Henry Percy, the first earl of Northumberland, who was immortalized in Shakespeare's *Henry IV Parts I and II*. Dine at the hotel's **Josephine Restaurant** to sample local fish and game.

Langley Castle Hotel

Haydon Bridge, Northumberland
NE47 5LU England
011 44 1434 688888
www.langleycastle.com

Edinburgh (which, because of its own inherent attractions, makes a good staging point). The route is entirely rural, crosses the Scottish-English border about midway, and skirts the edge of the stunning Northumberland National Park. Near Edinburgh it runs directly by Rosslyn Chapel, where *The Da Vinci Code* concludes, and farther south it passes Sir Walter Scott's grandly preposterous faux-medieval domain, Abbotsford, which is open to the public.

Head for Hexham, the town nearest to the eastern end of the best-maintained length of the wall, a stretch that extends west to Haltwhistle and beyond. As you might imagine, it's hard to lose your way—the hiking path is clearly marked, even where the wall itself is not much in evidence—but you will want Ordnance Survey Map No. 43 for its depth of information about terrain and other features. Also highly recommended is Anthony Burton's *Hadrian's Wall Path*, a volume in the indispensable National Trail Guide series. Resources like these are available not only at bookstores but also at any of the modern outfitter's stores with which the north country and borders areas abound, and, of course, at the well-stocked information outposts along the wall, such as those at Once Brewed and Housesteads.

It can be lonely country, Northumbria, and it's not as thick with accommodations and events as some other parts of England. One place I'd recommend to anyone is Langley Castle, which calls to mind the stately pile where a kilted Simon Callow suffers his fatal heart attack in *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. And the twice-weekly choral Evensong at Hexham Abbey is not to be missed: the soaring glory of Anglican hymns amid the spluttering light of dripping candelabra. Those ancient stones do retain the chill, though. The abbey preserves the gravestone of a Roman centurion, and I couldn't help but wonder how many times he must have looked south, toward the warmth of his youth. The nearest olive tree would have been 300 miles away. ■

Cullen Murphy is a senior editor of The Atlantic. He is at work on a book called Are We Rome?: America's Obsession With an Ancient Empire.



FOOD

Spring Chickens

Heirloom poultry is poised to become “the other red meat”—if fears about avian flu don’t keep people away

BY CORBY KUMMER

For years, I’ve avoided chicken like the plague. Alarming articles about food safety and inhumane raising practices (some in this magazine) put me off, and so did the plain fact that chicken had lost its flavor. The grainy and muscular yet succulent meat of my childhood had turned to wet cardboard. The specter of a real plague striking chickens in this country—the H5N1 form of avian influenza, which in the past two years has led to the death or slaughter of 140 million birds in Asia—made me look recently into heirloom breeds of chicken and their chances of survival if (or when, some say) avian flu is carried into North America.

Good-tasting, carefully raised chickens have been nearly impossible to find unless you live near a farmer who subscribes to the pasturing methods long advocated by Joel Salatin, the chicken guru, or near a hobbyist who can bear

to part with a beautiful bird like one of the Araucanas popularized by Martha Stewart (who even got a line of paints out of her flock’s eggs). But now, dedicated and small-scale farmers are raising strong and healthy chickens for meat, and it is just becoming available to chefs and home cooks hungry for chicken that tastes like chicken.

Pasture-raised chickens eat grass and peck for bugs rather than standing in miserably cramped pens; they spend the daylight hours outdoors. Their meat tastes so good it’s hard to believe you’re eating chicken and not some special game bird. The dark meat is much darker, because the birds have actually exercised; all of the meat has sinew and taste. The fat is a deep gold rather than an anemic yellow. Real chicken could practically be called “the other red meat.”

Farmers have spent years puzzling out for themselves the right breeds and how to raise them. But at the very moment that their work is promising to pay off, they face a choice: whether they will confine their nature-loving birds for the duration of a flu scare—or watch the results of their generally money-losing labor destroyed.

The heirloom-breed movement, which revived pork after decades of desiccation-by-design to turn it into the “other white meat,” has come late to the original white meat. The first, and for a long time pretty much the only, poultry success story was turkey. Slow Food USA, the group dedicated to helping farmers produce artisan foods, made a national impact by helping sell heirloom-breed turkeys at Thanksgiving, beginning several years ago. As the project was getting under way, I attended a tasting of various breeds. The small-scale farmers there told colorful stories of chasing turkeys and pulling them back into fenced fields, or coaxing them down from roofs where they were trying to roost—stories of the independent and often ornery personalities of birds they’d always assumed had none.

FIVE RECIPES FOR ROAST CHICKEN

The Zuni Cafe Cookbook, by Judy Rodgers (Norton). The bird is seasoned for several days, a step that can be cut down to overnight for pasture-raised chicken. The precisely described cooking times and visual cues are very useful, and an accompanying bread salad, dressed with drippings, makes any meal a holiday.



Bistro Cooking at Home, by Gordon Hamersley and Joanne McAllister Smart (Broadway Books). A recipe that helped make the reputation of Hamersley's Bistro, in Boston: chicken coated with a mustard-garlic-herb marinade, roasted, and run under the broiler at the last minute, then topped with lemon slices and served with roasted garlic cloves.



Essentials of Classic Italian Cooking, by Marcella Hazan (Knopf). My default method: stick two smallish lemons, well punctured, into the cavity, then roast—turning the chicken once—for about 90 minutes. An amazingly simple and good recipe. Seasoning is always more effective from the inside out.



The Chinese Chicken Cookbook, by Eileen Yin-Fei Lo (Simon & Schuster). Chicken baked in salt, an ancient method that involves encasing the bird in hot salt. The results of what seems like a school project always delight cooks: salty and papery skin but very moist, not overly salty meat.



Roasting, by Barbara Kafka (William Morrow). The recipe that launched a best-selling book and brought roast chicken into the super-sonic age: roast at the highest heat your oven can manage, smoke alarms be damned, and get a damn-near-perfect bird in less than an hour.



The arrival of pasture-raised turkey at the teaching kitchens of the French Culinary Institute, in New York City, where the tasting was held, brought the dean of culinary studies, the chef Alain Sailhac, nearly to tears. At last, he told the group that night, he had recaptured a flavor he'd thought was lost forever: the turkey of his childhood, half a century ago, on a farm in southern France. At the main course, I was reminded of the capon of my own childhood, in a small Connecticut town with numerous poultry farms—a fine-grained, moist, wonderfully flavored meat I hadn't expected to find again, and certainly not in a turkey.

Heirloom turkeys were expensive (a twelve-pound bird could come to more than \$100 including shipping), but the demand was strong enough to encourage Patrick Martins, the first

on concrete, even if birds have access to the outdoors (as the U.S. Department of Agriculture requires for the use of the term). Frank Reese, a Kansas farmer of fifty-seven who says he has raised poultry for fifty years, says that the definition of "humane methods" should include the breed itself. "You can take a [familiar supermarket] turkey and call it 'free-range organic,'" he says. "But because man has genetically altered it, that turkey doesn't know what to do if it goes outside. It can't even walk. That's not humane."

The breeds of chicken used by industry—mostly a cross between Plymouth Rock and White Cornish, descendants of birds bred for big and muscular breasts to make them good cockfighters—have been selected to be docile and timid, and to reach slaughter weight as fast as possible. Reese jealously protects his long-per-

Pasture-raised chicken tastes so good it's hard to believe you're not eating some special game bird.

director of Slow Food USA, and Todd Wickstrom, a former managing partner of Zingerman's Delicatessen, in Ann Arbor, to start a mail-order business specializing in rare-breed meats with real flavor: Heritage Foods USA (www.heritagefoodsusa.com). In the year since the company began, though, poultry has seldom been on its list. The progress in commercially viable rare-breed meats has been mostly in pork and beef; people are willing to pay extra for them, and the animals can be the main component of a farm rather than the adjunct that chickens usually are. Big birds like Thanksgiving turkeys are a once-a-year splurge. Chicken should be everyday. The challenges of scale, of choosing the right breeds, and of finding humane slaughterhouses within a convenient distance—not to mention the ubiquity and extremely low price of factory-raised chicken—have impeded businesses like Heritage Foods from filling the kind of niche that Niman Ranch filled with pork.

It has long been an open secret that "free-range chicken" is open to interpretation. The "range" is often indoors and

fed Barred Plymouth Rock breeding stock, which he supplies to four farms that raise chickens for him. (You can order whole birds through Heritage Foods; Reese sells chicken breasts and pieces at www.reeseturkeys.com.)

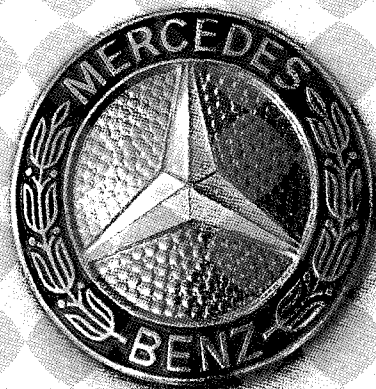
Birds that exercise have a firmer texture and take extra time to cook, but the payoff for patience is high. Reese told me about a customer who telephoned in tears of happiness because for the forty-five years of her marriage, her husband had said she couldn't make chicken and dumplings; she had assumed that the problem was her hand with the dumplings. After she cooked one of Reese's birds, her husband said she had finally made chicken and dumplings. (For recipes built around real chicken, including chicken with dumplings, try *The Taste of Country Cooking*, by the late Edna Lewis—one of the great cookbooks of the past fifty years.)

Farmers who raise chickens for Reese must adhere to guidelines of the Animal Welfare Institute: access to the outdoors and to clean water at all times; no antibiotics or animal by-products in feed; no clipping of wings, beaks, or toenails; and

of course no abuse. (Steve Striffler, an anthropologist at the University of Arkansas who worked at a poultry-processing plant, gives a powerful and disturbing report of modern industrial practices in *Chicken: The Dangerous Transformation of America's Favorite Food*.) Reese additionally mandates access to trees or brush or other outdoor sources of shade, and proper roosts so that no birds sleep on the ground. The four chicken farmers he works with "tore their cages down," he told me. "They say it's amazing how much they're enjoying the chickens. They never enjoyed them before."

Reese's years of breeding, and of finding like-minded farmers, could come to an abrupt end if H5N1 is discovered on any of the farms raising chickens for him—or maybe anywhere else in Kansas, depending on the policies state and federal officials adopt. He is proud of the hardiness of his birds: "It's like comparing the immune system of an athlete to someone who's obese and has diabetes," he says. But in an outbreak anywhere near him, his chickens would probably not be exempted from slaughter. As he and his fellow small-scale farmers know, no matter how robust a chicken, exposure to a new and highly pathogenic virus like H5N1 will be as calamitous to their flocks as it would be to weak, stressed, drugged-up, locked-up factory birds. Reese hopes that his distance from the biggest chicken-producing places in the country—including Georgia, North Carolina, Alabama, and the Delmarva Peninsula, which incorporates parts of Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia—will serve as protection. Unlike large-scale producers, Reese keeps no reserve of breeding stock in a high-security location in another state. He can't afford to. He still works full-time as a nurse anesthetist to support his farming. A mandatory slaughter order would wipe out decades of effort.

Frank and Laura Kay Jones have the air of crusading hippies—and why not? They are putting their life savings into raising and selling Barred Plymouth Rock chickens (the kind Reese favors) at Earth Shine Farm, in Durand, Michigan, near Flint and Lansing. (The farm's name comes from a 1969 book



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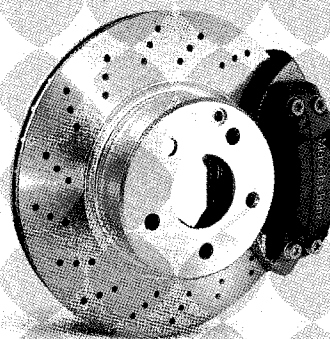
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GRIGNOLINO

Italy's Beaujolais is as rare as good chicken

I always look for excuses to order light-bodied red wines, which can span a far wider variety of dishes than big reds (from, say, veal shoulder to tuna tartare), and they're ideal with chicken. But they're tricky. Sometimes they seem too thin, or astringent, or plain wimpy.

On a recent trip to Piedmont, the Italian region known for its weighty reds, I was reminded of how much I like Grignolino, the Beaujolais of Italy. It's fresh and lively, with bright acidity and enough tannin to give it substance (the name is from a dialect word for pips—seeds—which contain tannin), and it has a light body that suits it to white meat.

Grignolino was long a wine of the aristocracy, and is said to be a favorite of the Piedmont-based Agnelli family, the modern-day aristocracy of Italy. But very few Grignolino vines survived the late-nineteenth-century phylloxera epidemic, and today just 1 percent of Piedmont vineyards are planted with them. Luckily, the handful of producers who do make Grignolino take special care with it, and one of the most highly regarded, Accornero, sells its Bricco del Bosco Grignolino at Smith & Vine, in Brooklyn, New York (718-243-2864, www.smithandvine.com). Find a bottle, try it with an heirloom bird, and you'll be supporting several endangered species. —CORBY KUMMER

by Anne Morrow Lindbergh about the first moon-orbiting flight.) Frank, who worked for decades at General Motors as a union representative for the United Auto Workers, wanted to make the couple's twelve acres pay—preferably with more of the same chickens they had long been raising. Laura Kay took a hard-line organic and animal-rights stand. Using as a starting point Joel Salatin's rousing lectures and his book *Pastured Poultry Profits*, the Joneses experimented with breeds, different movable coops for the birds to sleep in, schedules of pasture rotation, configurations of buildings, and equipment for slaughtering and quick chilling. They consulted (and tussled) with local and state inspectors.

Last year, after seven years of “hard knocks,” and at a make-or-break point shortly after Frank retired, “we were ready to stop,” Laura Kay told me when Todd Wickstrom brought me to visit their farm recently. Then the couple met Wickstrom. He was excited about the national possibilities for a local product, and he helped them decide to expand their own production. The new partners plan to build a slaughtering facility that employs air-chilling, a method popular in France that results in purer, more concentrated flavor because it avoids the standard icy water bath. The hope is that Earth Shine will become as well known nationally for chicken as Niman Ranch is for pork.

It is an open secret that “free-range chicken” is open to interpretation. The “range” is often indoors and on concrete.

In midwinter, few chickens were left on the farm; Wickstrom had recently persuaded the Joneses to send most of their young chickens to be served as poussins at a Bay Area dinner for the director George Lucas, knowing that Alice Waters and other cooks would taste them. Indeed, the response was the by-now-standard happy shock of chicken recognition. This spring, the Joneses will greatly increase their stocks. They told me that “spring chicken” has real meaning on their farm, where chickens ravenously consume fresh grass as soon as it comes up, and take a full twelve weeks to reach slaughter weight; factory-raised chickens are killed after six weeks. Earth Shine will also provide meat to Brian Polcyn, the chef at the nearby Five Lakes Grill and a co-author of the recent *Charcuterie*, for a line of pâtés and sausages made with, for instance, pistachios and Michigan dark cherries.

The chickens remaining were certainly the most placid and self-sufficient I've ever seen. When the Joneses opened the flaps of a tented hoop house (the kind usually used as a greenhouse), a few dozen handsome black-and-white birds strolled out and set to pecking on the grass. They had none of the frantic, easily spooked nature I remember

from other chicken houses. I felt I was eavesdropping on a calm and contented klatch. As the birds clucked around us, Laura Kay, cradling one she especially liked the looks of, said, “This is the way it should be.”

Her bravado was notable. “Our birds are healthy,” she said. “For seven years, we've raised birds on pasture and never had a disease go through here.” The problem, of course, will be infection elsewhere that provokes widespread destruction orders. Well-cooked poultry cannot transmit flu virus, and farmers in this country seldom come into anything like the unsanitary contact during slaughter and processing that has caused bird-to-person trans-

mission in Asia and eastern Europe. The awful possibility exists that a strain of H5N1 will evolve for person-to-person transmission and arrive here by jet, reducing decisions about poultry to secondary importance.

But the likelihood of panic and mandatory mass slaughter is real, and as of February, federal and state policies were still under discussion. “Farmers are concerned that if someone down the road is identified as having avian influenza, their [own] flocks will be summarily destroyed,” Marjorie Bender, the research and technical program manager at the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy, a touchstone organization for rare-breed farmers around the country, told me. “I'd like to see monitoring” within the area of infection. “But we don't know whether [the order] will be to monitor or to destroy.”

Chickens have survived health scares and mass slaughters in the recent past. With luck, they will survive new ones. In the meantime, pasture-raised birds finally offer a way to taste the flavor that has been available only to the farming few. Order some, and you might even be able to make chicken and dumplings. ▀

Corby Kummer is a senior editor of The Atlantic.



TECHNOLOGY

A Thousand Words

Cameras and telephones are coming together—and bringing people together—in ways that can shape society

BY JAMES FALLOWS

The technology world keeps wrestling with the “clock radio” question. This is the ever-changing attempt to figure out which devices can usefully be merged or combined, given the technology of the moment, and which ones still work best on their own.

It now seems obvious that bedside alarm clocks should come with radios or CD players built in. But it was not so obvious until both the clocks and the sound systems became small, cheap, and digitally controlled. The evolving design of cell phones combined with Palm- or BlackBerry-style PDAs reflects constant tension along this frontier, as companies struggle to devise something small and sleek enough to be an attractive cell phone yet big and stable enough to contain a workable keyboard.

Perhaps I just lack vision, but if asked ten years ago, I would never have guessed that one of the most promising hybrids at the start of the new cen-

tury would arise from the union of the camera and the telephone. Yet there is very strong evidence that the camera phone will soon seem as natural a combination as the clock radio. It already constitutes a huge market success. Somewhere around 300 million camera phones were sold worldwide last year, mainly by Nokia, Samsung, Motorola, and the other familiar providers. For at least three years, camera phones have outsold “normal” digital cameras, and the gap is widening. “We’re still just at the beginning of the process,” says Marc Davis, the founding director of Yahoo Research Berkeley, a partnership between Yahoo and the University of California that has undertaken research on the uses and effects of camera phones. “It is like the Internet in 1995”—when wireless access, always-on connections, and quick-and-easy search systems were conceptually foreseeable but not yet familiar, everyday practices.

U.S. Senator Orrin Hatch (left) uses a cell-phone camera at John Roberts’s Supreme Court nomination hearing

At the moment, the camera phones available in America have limitations reminiscent of those of the early Internet devices. On many, the resolution is not very good. The clarity of digital photographs is measured by “megapixels”—essentially, how many dots make up each image. Ordinary digital cameras now come with resolutions of three or four megapixels, and top-of-the-line models now have seven and up. These create images so detailed that even cropped portions retain clarity when enlarged. Many of today’s camera phones create one- or two-megapixel images. They typically lack a flash. Their lenses are very simple, like those in disposable cameras, so most of them can’t zoom or be precisely focused. And under many existing wireless service plans, sending photos from the camera to online storage sites or to other users can be complicated and expensive. According to a recent survey, some 60 to 70 percent of American camera-phone users rarely get their photos out of the phone and into a computer, or send them to someone else.

But low-res images, primitive lenses, no flash, and complications in sending—

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that's just for now! Because models and offerings are changing so rapidly, the only buying advice I'd dare offer is to view three megapixels as a threshold. With resolution less than that, a phone camera will be an extra device; with that or more, and with a flash, it can be your "real" camera. Three-megapixel models, with flash, are coming onto the market, and better ones shouldn't be far behind, given progress in Asia and

cumbersome; and their identifying labels tend to be completely meaningless—like this label for a picture I recently took of my family with my regular digital camera: P1010008.JPG. Naaman's research involves ways pictures taken with camera phones can be automatically labeled and classified, so the search for a shot from the Trevi Fountain or last year's birthday will become shorter and more satisfying.

"We're still just at the beginning of the process," says camera-phone researcher Marc Davis. "It is like the Internet in 1995."

Europe. Last year Samsung offered the first eight-megapixel product—in Korea. Camera-phone use is more widespread in Europe and much of Asia than in America, and wireless coverage is generally better. (This brings up a related theme: the pathetic backwardness of the United States in all things wireless. More on this another time.)

"People who call themselves photographers will probably always rely on specialized cameras," Davis says. "But for the vast majority of people who take pictures, we're nearing the point where they'll find themselves using the camera inside their phone." Assuming he's right, why will that matter? The more I talk to people in this field, the more convinced I am by their argument that the camera-phone era really will change individual, social, and possibly even political behavior.

That change will start with people's actually being able to find, use, and show around their rapidly expanding collection of digital photos. "This offers hope for solving the 'shoebox problem,'" says Mor Naaman, also of Yahoo Research Berkeley and a veteran of Stanford's computer-science department. The collection of digital photos most people quickly amass is, if anything, harder to make use of than the box of snapshots it replaced. Digital photos pile up faster; scanning through them can be slow and

Every camera-phone shot carries information that helps classify it. "For one thing, it's very likely that the photo was taken by you, or is of you," Naaman says. "People share their cameras but usually not their phones." The photo also has an exact time stamp, because a camera phone is always updating its time from the service provider's network. This avoids the problem that plagues my own digital photos: most appear to have been taken on January 1, 2000, because my camera loses its date whenever I change the batteries, and I long ago grew tired of resetting it. A camera phone can also record where a picture was taken. Mobile-phone networks can keep track of a phone while it's in use, either through GPS receivers built into some models or by triangulation on nearby cell towers. "Geotagged" photos from such systems can be directly uploaded to sites like geosnapper.com, where they become part of a searchable collection.

On his Stanford Web site, reachable through tinyurl.com/c5rx7, Naaman shows what his auto-classification tool can do. He has posted several thousand of his own photos, which the system has categorized by location, time of day, season, and so on. It's a step up from the shoebox. An automated system obviously requires more computing power than is now available in the camera phone itself; working prototypes of such services already exist. Other

software being tested automatically recognizes faces, or landmarks, or kinds of social events.

Camera phones, apart from their role in classifying photos you might have taken in any case (photos from regular digital cameras don't come with automatic location data, and few have an accurate time), seem likely to mark a change in the kinds of pictures people take. Caterina Fake, the founder of the photo-sharing site Flickr, says that whenever she gets off an airplane flight, she snaps a picture in the baggage area and sends it immediately to her mother: "She always worries about planes, and this lets her sleep at night." Nancy Van House, a Berkeley professor whose current project involves "the social uses of personal photography," says that she thinks of her phone as a kind of memo pad. "I find that I'm using it just to capture text," she says. "If I see a book in a bookstore I want to look at later, I take a picture of the cover, as a note to myself."

Clearly, it makes a difference to have a camera always at hand, and to be able to instantly share what you see. Many of the projects under way at Flickr and Yahoo Berkeley involve what Marc Davis calls "sharing with others known and unknown." "Known others" would be friends or family members. Caterina Fake says that when a woman she knows was having a baby, the husband took his camera phone to the hospital and sent discreet progress pictures to a Web site, where friends could view them.

"Unknown others" are people linked only by sharing a common experience or interest. The unknown audience can include prospective travelers who view street scenes in Budapest or Rangoon posted on Flickr, and it can even extend to a broad news-consuming public, as journalists and onlookers equipped with camera phones record ever more of the world's hard news. After the London subway bombings last July, hundreds of civilians with camera phones posted pho-

tos on Web sites in greater variety, and faster, than official news organizations did. International newspapers now post amateur camera-phone pictures of events that news photographers have been unable to get to. American guards at Abu Ghraib used camera phones to take and share photos of themselves posing with prisoners. After the photos became public, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld issued a sweeping ban on camera phones at U.S. military installations in Iraq.

Systems built into Flickr and similar photo-sharing sites, Davis says, will make "personal memory, and social and global memory, accessible in a way it was not before." Such language usually makes me cringe. But then I think of the connections I've made and valued through Internet affinity groups, and the many events where I would have liked to see what other people noticed, and I think I know what he means. ▀

James Fallows is a national correspondent for The Atlantic.

The Canon Redefined

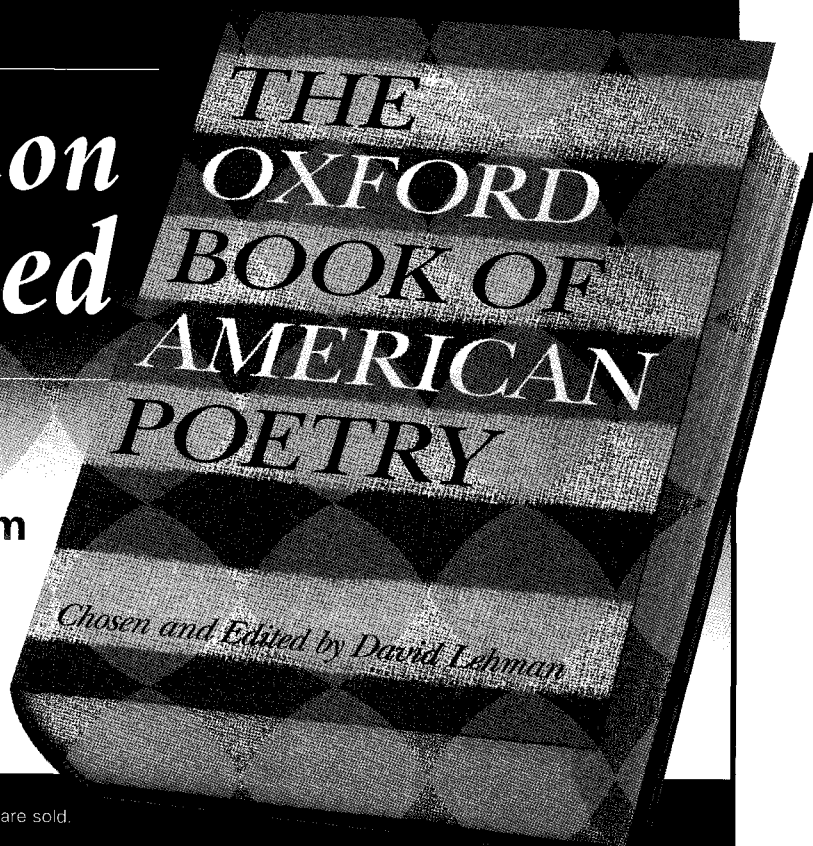
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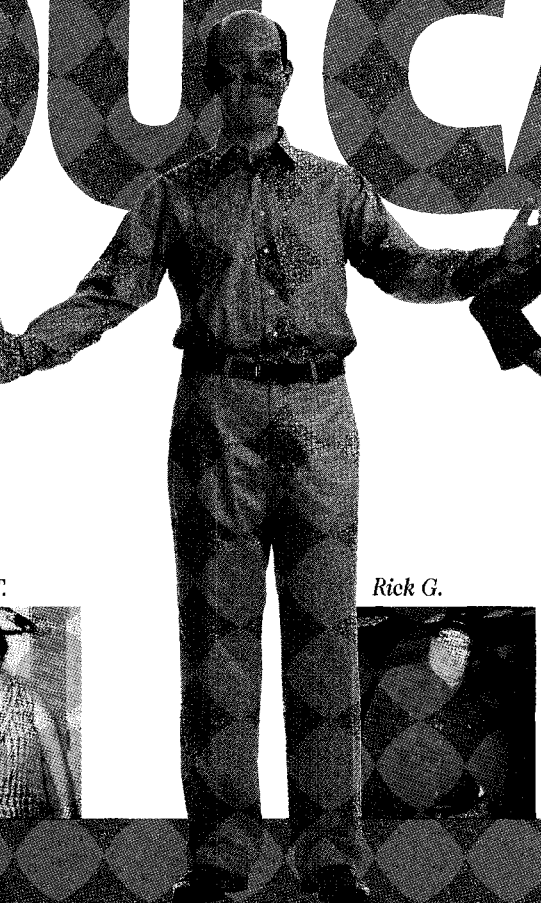


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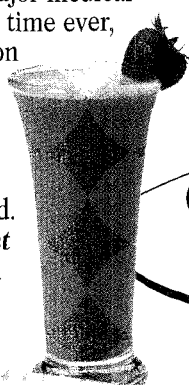
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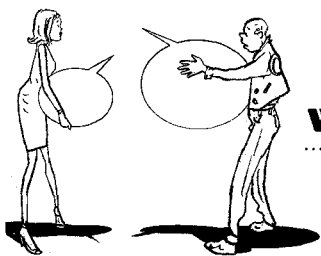
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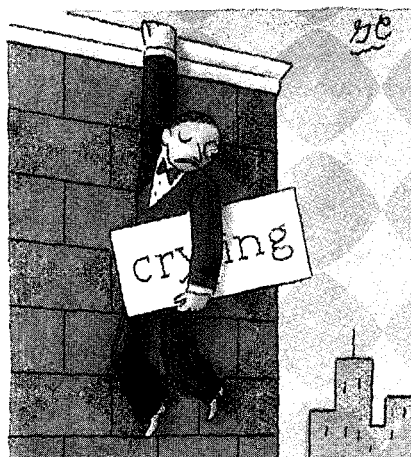
by BARBARA WALLRAFF

CATHY CIKRA, of Hartville, Ohio, writes: "A colleague and I have a dispute about 'dangling' participles at the ends of sentences. He takes an unyielding line against them. I've provided him with copious evidence of their perfectly clear use—for instance, in *The New York Times*. I've also found a defense of them in Bryan A. Garner's *Oxford Dictionary of American Usage and Style*. Garner cites the following as acceptable: 'The boy ran out of the house crying.' My colleague says that my evidence is just proof of the grammatical deterioration of American writers and that the usage is wrong, especially in academic writing. Am I totally off base here?"

No. Your co-worker would have a point if he were arguing that a participle or participial phrase *can* go wrong at the end of a sentence, and that this problem isn't always acknowledged. Of a dozen usage manuals from the past fifty years that I checked, only six mention that dangles (which may or may not involve participles) can lurk somewhere in a sentence besides at the beginning. One of the six, Theodore M. Bernstein's *Careful Writer*, gives the example "The victory was his seventh in a row and his tenth since last *dropping* a decision last September." The problem with *dropping*, though, isn't that the noun it modifies is too far away. The problem is that the sentence doesn't include any noun or pronoun that it could modify. Who or what *dropped* that decision? Why, he did. But *he* isn't in the sentence.

It's also true that participles can dangle even when they do have something to modify. (From Bernstein again: "*Lying* stride the Quebec-Labrador boundary, a prospector looking for gold found the ore in what is known as the Labrador trough.") But "The boy ran out of the house *crying*" doesn't bring to mind an image of a house in tears. It's fine.

Your co-worker would also have a point if he said that a century ago, usage authorities were warier of participles toward the ends of sentences than they are now. Is that evidence of "grammatical deterioration"? I suppose. But the flexibility that English sentence structure allows us is widely considered a good thing—better, at any rate, than our having to maintain a rigid word order. We can say, "*Crying*, the boy ran out of the house." We can say, "The boy ran, *crying*, out of the house." And we can say, "The boy ran out of the house *crying*." None of these versions will confuse anyone, and none of them will



make readers burst out laughing. One of the main reasons to avoid dangles is to keep from making oneself ridiculous. That may also be a reason not to go overboard in avoiding them.

LORRAINE CHARLTON, of Guilford, Connecticut, writes: "I recently heard the BBC correspondent Katty Kay say on an NPR show, 'The idea of objectivity, or even striving for objectivity, almost sounds quaint in mainstream media today—and it *shouldn't do*.' It *shouldn't do* what? I lived in the U.K. for four years, and I heard that kind of construction all the time. I can't abide it. Beyond that it seems to be

customary in British English, is there any valid reason for it?"

Let me explain. To which you might respond, "Please do." Do what? Explain, of course. Even in American English, *do* serves as a sort of pronoun for verbs. That is, we use it instead of the original verb to avoid repeating ourselves or each other. The British usage authority R. W. Burchfield, in his book *The New Fowler's Modern English Usage*, notes that British English speakers commonly use *do* after *have* or a "modal verb," like *should*, "to represent an earlier predicate: ... *Adults don't believe children but they should do*." To American ears, such *dos* sound superfluous, but they're not illogical.

LARRY RIBNICK, of Crawford, Colorado, writes: "I was taught that the short form of *until* was *'til*. Until today, I was irritated by the many modern writers who use *till* instead. But I just read a poem by William Butler Yeats, 'The Song of Wandering Aengus,' that uses *till* as the short form. Now I'm confused. Did Yeats get it wrong?"

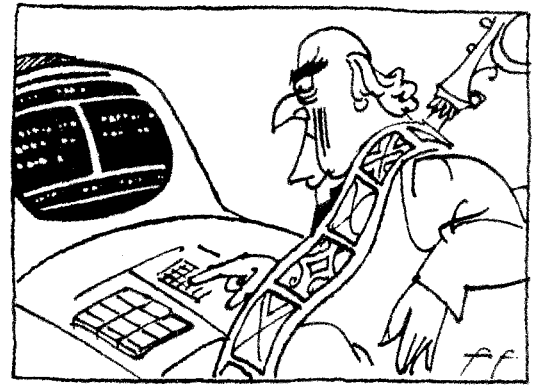
No, Yeats had it right, and whoever taught you about *'til* had it wrong. *Till* is actually an older word than *until*. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, *till* was used in Old English (spoken until about 1150) to mean a "fixed point, station." *Untill* turned up in Middle English times (spoken from then until about 1500), when it meant "up to, as far as + *till*." But *till*—or *tille* or *tylle* or *til*—continued to be used, developing much the same meaning as *untill*. Today the major American dictionaries all show a preference for *till*, or they call *'til* a variant of *till*.

Do you have a language dispute? Write to Word Court in care of The Atlantic Monthly, P.O. Box 67375, Chestnut Hill, MA 02467, or send e-mail to msgrammar@theatlantic.com. All letters become the property of Word Court. Ms. Grammar is also on the Web, at www.theatlantic.com/courtrecord.

The Last Edwardian

Michael Wharton (1913–2006)

BY MARK STEYN



In his famous publisher's statement in the first issue of *National Review*, William F. Buckley Jr. declared that his magazine "stands athwart history, yelling 'Stop.'" I'm not sure he meant it even then, and certainly he's availed himself of many innovations of the modern age in the years since, including television and computers.

By contrast, Michael Wharton did mean it. He had no use for television, and never watched it unless he happened to be in a room in which the "receiving apparatus" was present. His conservatism was founded on the proposition, "All change is for the worse," and thus history should have stopped round about the year he was born, 1913. For a British writer truly standing athwart the march of time yelling "Stop," there are two ways to go: you can create an idealized Edwardian England, as P. G. Wodehouse did (though he preferred to live on Long Island), or you revel in your latter-day dystopia, creating a range of fantastical characters emblematic of England's decline. That's the path Wharton chose, under the pseudonym "Peter Simple" in the country's best-selling broadsheet, *The Daily Telegraph*.

For forty-nine years—from New Year's Day 1957 to the column filed four days before his death on January 23—Wharton chronicled British life as a satirical fantasia through the eyes of Dr. Spacely-Irellis, "the go-ahead Bishop of Bevindon" and author of *God The Humanist*; the environmental consultant Keith Effluvium; Dr. Heinz Kiosk, psychiatric adviser to the Ministry of Agriculture and many other eminent bodies, with his great cry of "We are all guilty!"; Mrs. Dutt-Pauker, "the Hampstead thinker" and prototype of what Americans would call "limousine liberals," who champions the world's most deserving causes from her north London mansion Marxmount; the hard-hitting Fleet Street columnist Jack Moron, "The Man Who

Knows It All," with his mostly unheeded clarion call, "Wake up, Britain!"; Sir Herbert Trance, of the British Boring Board of Control, whose deliberations, reported by Wharton's correspondent "Narcolept," determined which modish transgressive cause was now sufficiently tedious to be admitted to the torpor of its hallowed if drowsy precincts. For the country's burgeoning "race relations industry," Wharton invented the "prejudometer," which simply by being pointed at any person could calculate degrees of racism to the nearest *prejudon*, "the internationally recognized scientific unit of racial prejudice."

If the professional grievance industry, tabloid blowhards, trendy clerics, eco-zealots, pampered progressives, and psychobabbling social-pseudoscientists seem rather obvious targets in 2006, well, most of Wharton's cast of characters were in place by the early '60s, and the author had the melancholy satisfaction of spending the next forty years watching the real world remorselessly close the gap with satiric invention. The "go-ahead Bishop of Bevindon" eventually acquired a "partner," Dr. Mantissa Shout, but the gay bishop of New Hampshire's explanation to the Episcopal Synod that sex with his own long-term partner was "sacramental" must have had Wharton fearing for the future of satire. Decades ago, he invented a pliable, media-friendly "moderate" Conservative of no fixed beliefs—Jeremy Cardhouse, leader of the Tories for Progress group—only to see him at the very end of his long life triumphantly anointed as head of the apparently real British Conservative Party under the name "David Cameron."

For most of Wharton's time there, the *Telegraph* was not known as a home of "good writing." Indeed, it was a point of pride: the paper had no op-ed page, and scarcely any columnists save for the

pseudonymous Wharton. Battered by imperial decline, the "permissive society," and later "political correctness," his middle-class readers were appreciative of Peter Simple, if not always clear on the point of intersection between reality and the author's imagination. A reference to the book *The Naked Afternoon Tea* by Henry Miller prompted many complaints from frustrated readers that the volume appeared to be unavailable in any store.

Much of Peter Simple's world revolved around "the Stretchford conurbation" in the industrial heart of England, a grim conglomeration of boroughs, from Nerdley to Soup Hales, centered on "lovely sex-maniac-haunted Sadcake Park," "the iron lung of Stretchford," and the dozens if not hundreds of universities with which the conurbation was endowed. There was no conceivable ethnic minority unrepresented among its terrace houses. In 1991, Harold Pinter, who is a real person and not a fictional character, decided to oppose the grotesque half-millennial celebrations of Columbus's discovery—whoops, "discovery"—of the Americas by launching a group called Five Hundred Years of Resistance. Immediately, Stretchford's Aztec community, comprising descendants of settlers who'd crossed the Atlantic in stone boats in the Dark Ages and settled in the West Midlands, announced its support for Pinter's campaign. The community's leader, a forty-three-year-old twenty fifth-year sociology student at Nerdley University, offered the playwright the high honor of being the principal sacrifice on the group's anti-Columbus step pyramid, assuming its grant from Nerdley Arts came through.

Stretchford's mercantile establishment coped with a changing Britain as best it could. At the start of the Iraq War

in 2003, Sir Edwin Gough-Jones, chairman of the Stretchford Tourist Board, announced plans for VI Day—Victory over Iraq.

“My aim,” he said, “is to stage a celebration which will be worthy of the victory of good over evil but at the same time will avoid triumphalism . . . In the event of victory by Saddam Hussein, the above arrangements will be canceled. No monies can be refunded.”

Wharton himself was opposed to the invasion of Iraq. He despised the “war on terror” as an obvious bit of weaselly obfuscation. There was no “neo” in his conservatism, and his antipathy to Bush was muted only by his more generalized dislike of the American imperium, reflected in his reprinting of “thoughtful” editorials from *The Feudal Times* and *Reactionary Herald*. On the president’s trip to London in 2003, the futile *Times* editors recalled the visit of a previous “leader of the North American rebel colonists”: Woodrow Wilson, “in his self-righteous folly and ignorance of world affairs, preached ‘self-determination for all nations’ and approved the tragic collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and other noble and historical institutions, with consequences that are with us to this day.”

Which was more or less how he felt. His idealized England, like Wodehouse’s, was the last Edwardian summer, the sun-dappled lawns of 1914. The first volume of his autobiography, *The Missing Will* (1984), begins with a marvelous evocation of his ancestral home—the great house and gardens, the long gallery with its portraits of ancient forebears—and young Michael’s earliest childhood memory: of the telegram from the Western Front bearing the news that his brother, the viscount, was dead.

And then the scene dissolves, and Michael Bernard Nathan is born in rather more modest circumstances in Shipley to a German-Jewish father and a mother with a broad, working-class Yorkshire accent. It was after Oxford in the early 30s that he adopted his mother’s maiden

name of Wharton. No friend of Israel, indifferent to charges of racism and anti-Semitism, Wharton-Nathan would be an easy case for a Dr. Heinz Kiosk: the exile who doesn’t quite fit in who converts himself into a parodic English xenophobe only to discover that he, too, no longer fits in. Wharton’s second volume of autobiography, *A Dubious Codicil* (1991), includes a passage where he threatens to cut his son off without a penny for changing his surname back to Nathan. Is he really that twitchy about his Jewishness? Is it just another joke? Or is not making quite clear which it is the best joke of all?

In the course of his ninety-two years, Wharton wrote millions of words but said hardly any. W.F. Deedes, the model for William Boot in Evelyn Waugh’s great novel of British journalism, *Scoop* (1938), and still a columnist at the *Telegraph* today, went to interview the elderly cherub for his ninetieth birthday and had to crowbar out every three-word response—most of them “I suppose so” and similar.

“You were a Colonel in the last war?”

“Yes, but only in Intelligence,” he replied, as if, wrote Deedes, “it had been an occupation reserved for men of low mental ability.”

Even then, Wharton found himself oddly drawn to his nation’s enemies. In an idle moment, he invented a fanatical one-eyed general in Hirohito’s Imperial High Command consumed by a visceral hatred of England after a brief stay in Harrogate. He genuinely admired the Serbs, as the chaps who held the line against the marauding Turk so gallantly, but otherwise he had a preference for unsympathetic lost causes: Ulster Unionists, white Rhodesians, etc. He had a sneaking respect for the bloodier aspects of Islam, but the British Left embraced the jihad so wholeheartedly that it was hard for him to get a word in.

The gulf between Michael Wharton and Peter Simple was largely unknown to the author’s devoted suburban readers. For several decades of his adult life,

he operated an “open marriage.” His memoirs detail his second wife’s twenty-year affair with another well-known journalist, “a man I liked and admired, an honorable man,” who eventually comes to Wharton and says: “I will ask you a question. If you answer ‘yes,’ the affair will go no further. Do you love Kate?”

Wharton mulls it over and answers, “No.” The scene has odd echoes of that cruel moment in Evelyn Waugh’s cruellest novel, *A Handful of Dust* (1934), and it makes you wonder whether Wharton might also have had a great novel in him (he published one, unsuccessfully). He pondered that question, too—after all, his equally fictional columnar colleague at the *Telegraph*, Bridget Jones, jumped to hard covers and the silver screen. But he consoled himself in later years with the thought that, even if he had been a hugely famous novelist, he’d undoubtedly have outlived his success and been washed up by now. Instead, he kept going up till the Friday before his death.

In the last days of his life, two of the four leadership candidates for the Liberal Democrat Party were outed for consorting with rent boys and calling gay chat lines, and a gay Conservative leaped to their defense by arguing that sexual recklessness went hand in hand with political courage, citing as evidence his own experience of oral sex in the office of a minister of the crown.

It was a good week for a satirist to check out.

As Wharton wrote of Alderman Foodbotham, “the 25-stone, crag-visaged, iron-watch-chained, grim-booted perpetual chairman of the Bradford City Tramways and Fine Arts Committee”: “According to legend, he did not die, but lies asleep in a convenient cave, awaiting the blast of a horn, mill-hooter or other appropriate instrument which will summon him to wake and save his city and his country in their hour of greatest need. But the hour is late and few believe in the legend any longer.” ▀

Mark Steyn is a columnist for the Chicago Sun-Times and other publications.

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